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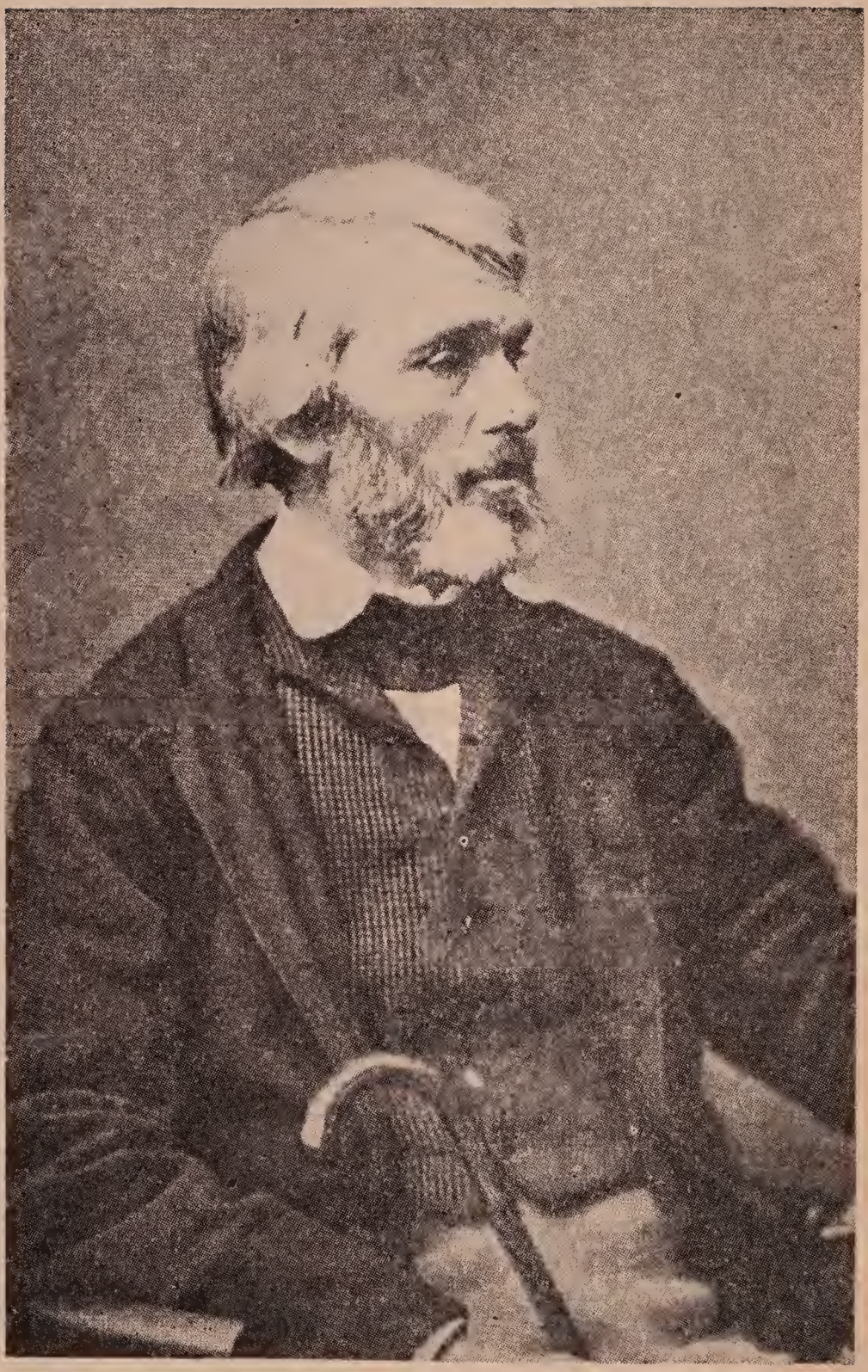

THOMAS CARLYLE

THE WESTERN SERIES OF ENGLISH AND AMERICAN CLASSICS

Thomas Carlyle's Essay on Burns

WITH

SELECTIONS FROM THE POETRY OF ROBERT BURNS

EDITED FOR SCHOOL USE

BY

IRENE P. McKEEHAN

Professor of English, University of Colorado

HARLOW PUBLISHING CO.

Oklahoma City

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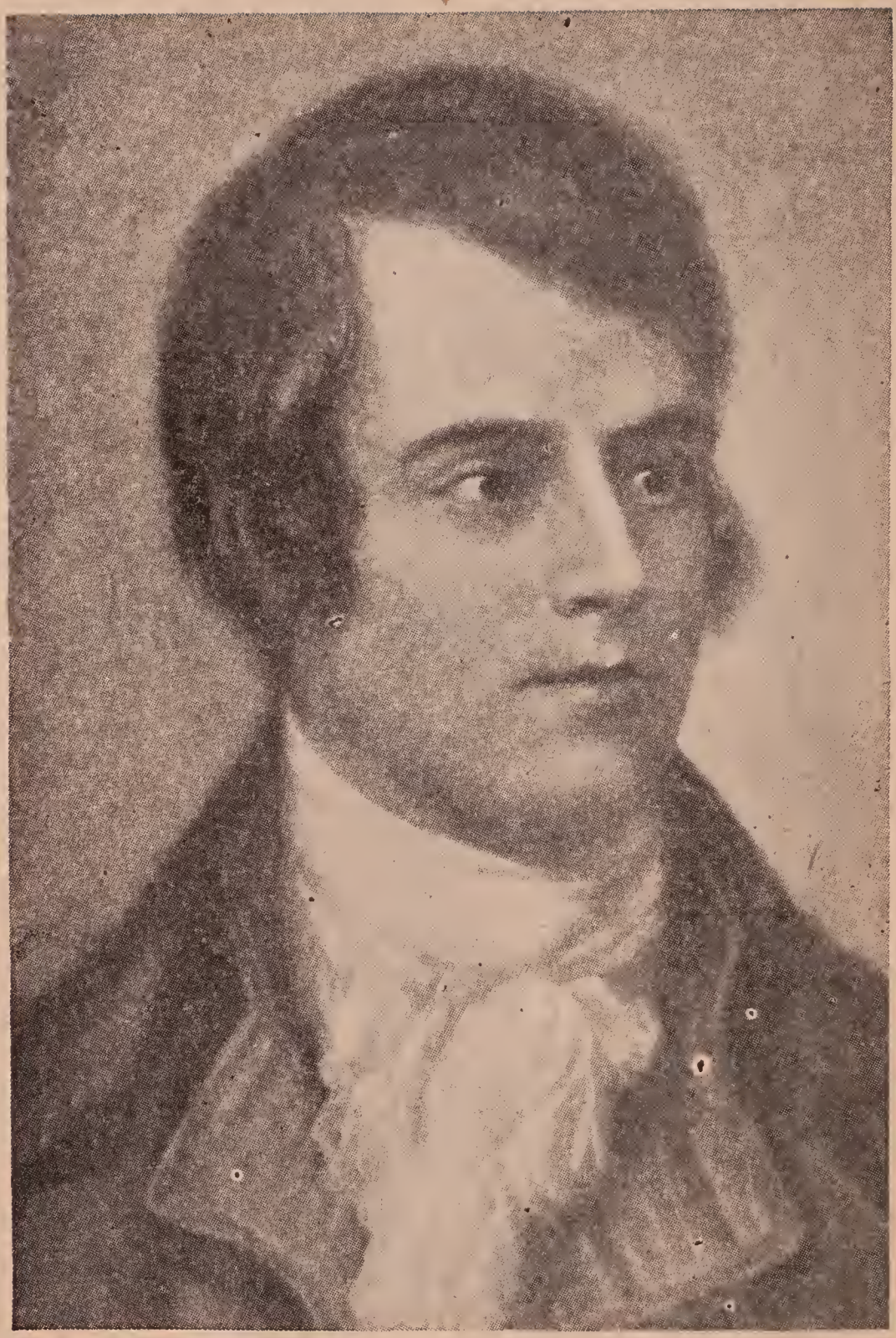
Carlyle's Essay on Burns



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ROBERT BURNS

INTRODUCTION

I

ROBERT BURNS

Robert Burns was born, January 25, 1759, at Alloway, a little village on the banks of the Doon, near Ayr, the county town of Ayrshire, Scotland. The house of his birth, still standing close to the roadside, is a small, dark, clay cottage, without beauty or comfort. His father, William Burnes or Burness—for Robert altered the spelling of his family name—was a gardener. His mother, whose maiden name had been Agnes Brown, was the daughter of a tenant-farmer. Education was hard to get in those days, especially for women, and Mrs. Burnes could not sign her own name. She was a good woman, however, sensible, cheerful, and devoted to her husband and children, who repaid her devotion with respect and love. Burns's father, by all accounts, was an extraordinary man, intelligent, sincerely religious, unfailingly honest. Carlyle, in his *Heroes and Hero-Worship,* calls him "brave, hard-toiling, hard-suffering," and adds, "Burns's schoolmaster came afterwards to London, learnt what good society was; but declares that in no meeting of men did he ever enjoy better discourse than at the hearth of this peasant." The same man, Murdoch by name, said also that William Burnes was "by far the best of the human race he had ever known." When we read, then, that Burns was "of lowly birth," it is well to remember that he came of good stock and had every reason to be proud of his family.

Unfortunately, circumstances were so unfavorable that all the industry and intelligence of William Burnes could not make a comfortable living for his

wife and children. In 1766, he gave up his work as gardener and rented a farm at Mt. Oliphant, near Alloway, which he stocked by means of money borrowed from his landlord. The soil proved to be very poor; crops failed; the livestock died of disease. The landlord had been kind, but after his death, the agent or "factor," into whose hands the estate fell, exacted every penny of rent and interest promptly under harsh threats of legal penalties. Robert was the eldest son, strong and large for his age, and he and the second brother, Gilbert, had to go to work much too early. By the time he was fifteen years old, the poet was "ploughman and principal laborer." Held close to daily toil, bound down to the routine of the farm, with almost no society outside his own family, he said of his life at this time that it combined "the cheerless gloom of a hermit with the unceasing toil of a galley slave." A move to another farm at Lochlea, near Tarbolton, when Robert was eighteen, improved things a little. Here there was, at least, some congeniality, and the Burns brothers mingled socially in the village life. At this place, William Burnes died in 1784.

It is evident that in such a boyhood of poverty and labor there was little opportunity for education. The brothers went irregularly and for short periods to the village school, which was taught at one time by the Mr. Murdoch who has been already referred to. This man took an interest in Robert, and when the latter was fourteen gave him a special course of lessons in English and French. At seventeen he stayed for three months with his mother's family at Kirkoswald, where he studied geometry under a Mr. Rodgers. But the seven Burns children had the best part of their schooling at home, with their father as schoolmaster, reading books with them and discussing what they read in the family circle. Before Burns became known

to the world, he had read more extensively and had a much wider knowledge of English literature than the average high school graduate of to-day can pretend to.

When the future poet was twenty-three years old, he left home to work as a flax-dresser in the town of Irvine. Here he got into rather bad company, and entered on a career of what, for want of a better name, may be called dissipation. It is to be noted, however, that until he was twenty-five—that is, until after his father's death—there was little in his conduct to be severely criticized.

The event just mentioned marks a turning-point in Burns's life. After settling up his father's financial affairs as best they could, Robert and Gilbert Burns took the lease of a farm called Mossgiel near the town of Mauchline. One of Burns's recent biographers, D. McNaught, remarks, "Had Mossgiel been ten times the distance from the village of Mauchline that it really was the whole complexion of his after-life might have been different. To a man of his mental organization a community of fellow mortals within a quarter of an hour's walk from his dwelling was an attraction as irresistible as the action of the law of gravity. Every hour he could spare was spent in the village." Some of his "fellow mortals" in Mauchline were, like his landlord and friend, Gavin Hamilton, men who could converse thoughtfully on intellectual subjects; too many of them were "rantin', roarin', ravin' Billies." It should be remembered in Burns's defense that hard drinking was customary in those days, that total abstainers were practically unheard of, that every man, especially every man in "good society," was expected to be drunk occasionally. We must also take into account his desire for sociability, his cramped and toilsome youth to which had been denied all relaxa-

tion, and a feeling of bitterness in his heart against the whole scheme of things that had made him, superior in gifts as he knew himself to be, a mere ploughman, the social inferior of many obviously ordinary persons. Add to this the realization that some of the "unco guid and rigidly righteous" people of the town were really pretentious hypocrites, covering up their own sins and loudly blaming more open sinners like himself. All these things combined to drive Burns into opposition to the established morality and religion of his neighborhood, though, remembering his father, he had always a profound respect for true piety. We can find excuses for his conduct, but the wreck that it made of his life is its sufficient condemnation.

In 1786, after a series of love affairs, he entered into an irregular, though legal, marriage with Jean Armour, the daughter of a mason at Mauchline. Rather on account of Burns's poverty than because of his bad reputation, Mr. Armour refused to countenance the marriage and destroyed the written proofs of it. Disgraced and miserable, threatened with imprisonment for debt, Burns now resolved to try his fortunes in the West Indies. He had secured a position as a bookkeeper on an estate in Jamaica and had engaged passage on a vessel when an event happened that opened up new prospects of success for him.

This was the reception of the first edition of his poems, published at Kilmarnock in the summer of the same year. To explain this, we must go back a little. Robert Burns began composing verse at the age of sixteen, his first song having been made in honor of a young girl, his partner in the harvest-field. He did not write many or very good poems until after his twenty-third year, but from that time on until 1786, he turned out verses in great abundance and of very

good quality. As Carlyle says in his *Essay*, he wrote of things close at hand, of the men and women about him, of the daily experiences of his life. When his favorite ewe nearly died, he celebrated the event in *Poor Mailie's Elegy;* when his plough uprooted a daisy or ran through the nest of a field-mouse, he was moved with sympathy and wrote *To a Mountain Daisy* and *To a Mouse;* his reverence for his father and mother and their sincere religion found expression in *The Cotter's Saturday Night;* into *Halloween* and *The Jolly Beggars* he introduced the rustic merry-makers and the rough frequenters of the tavern, just as he had known them in real life.

These poems and many more like them, written in the Scotch dialect which he spoke himself, he passed around among his friends, who read and praised them. When, then, in 1786, he found himself in need of money to pay off his debts and provide for his passage across the Atlantic, he made up a volume of his verses and gave them to a printer named John Wilson in the neighboring town of Kilmarnock. Wilson agreed to print them on a venture, which turned out to be an astonishing success. Not only were the 612 copies bought and read in Ayrshire, but the poet's fame spread to other parts of Scotland. Mrs. Dunlop of Dunlop, an aristocratic lady of means in the neighborhood, bought a dozen copies and expressed her admiration in a letter to the poet, which was the beginning of a long-continued friendship. Above all, Dr. Blacklock, a noted literary man of Edinburgh, wrote to a friend of his, a clergyman, telling of the favorable reception of the book in the capital and urging the unknown writer to come to the city himself and arrange for the publication of a second edition there. It was this letter which turned Burns back

when he was already on his way to set sail from the port of Greenock bound for America.

Instead of going to the West Indies, he went to Edinburgh. Carlyle in his *Essay* has so much to say about this visit to Edinburgh that it is hardly worth while to enlarge upon it here. It lasted through the greater part of the year 1787—though he spent several months of that year in a journey through various districts of Scotland—and he did not finally leave the city until March 24, 1788. During that period he had received much attention, had been treated as a social celebrity, and had made the acquaintance of many prominent men and women. The Edinburgh edition of his poems had been published and had netted the poet about £500, a good deal larger sum than the same amount would be at the present time. He realized, however, that he could not live by means of his literary efforts, nor had he any desire to do so. As a "ploughman poet," he was more an object of curiosity than of permanent interest to his city friends, who evidently made him feel that, much as they admired his verses, they did not regard him as their social equal. There seem to have been some notable exceptions to this attitude of condescension, but on the whole that was the impression that he carried away with him. Who can wonder that it made him bitter?

He saw that he must leave Edinburgh and adopt some permanent plan for earning his living. In those days in Scotland a very large number of articles in common use were subject to certain taxes called *Excise duties*, the men who collected which were called *Excisemen*. Such appointments were largely in the gift of influential noblemen and officers of the government, and some of Burns's new friends secured him a position as Exciseman in Dumfriesshire. Thinking that he could combine farming with the duties of his

new office, he rented a farm which was known as Ellisland, not far from the town of Dumfries.

Before he moved to his new home, he made a loan to his brother Gilbert to save the farm at Mossgiel, settled part of his small capital on his mother, and formally acknowledged his earlier marriage to Jean Armour, by whom he already had several children. Husband, wife, and children settled down at Ellisland in June, 1788, and the "Excise and Farm Scheme," as Carlyle calls it, began to work. It proved to work very badly. His duties as Exciseman took up too much of his time and energy. He had to ride about the country on horseback exposed to all sorts of weather, and as much of his official business consisted in hunting for smuggled whiskey and in testing or "gauging" ale and other liquors, he was constantly exposed to temptations very difficult for a man of his convivial nature to resist. He soon found that he could not attend to his farm, which proved a drain on his income. He has often been blamed for giving up his lease in 1791 and moving with his family to Dumfries, but from an economic point of view it was a sensible thing to do. He was much better off after the move than before.

Rather too much has been made of Burns's poverty during the latter part of his life. His salary and the various fees and profits attached to his office brought him an annual income of from £150 to £250 a year, which was quite enough in those days for a middle-class family to live respectably on. Though he was a man of extravagant tastes and of praiseworthy generosity to his relatives and friends, he managed, as Carlyle says, to keep out of debt and left at his death more than £270 in money and personal property.

It may be said that Burns's dissipation in his closing years at Dumfries and his social ostracism have

also been exaggerated, but unfortunately he cannot be cleared of the charge of having wasted a good deal of his noble genius in riotous living. He contributed numerous pieces to collections of Scottish songs by a man named Johnson and by George Thomson. For these songs he refused pay, regarding them as a labor of love and patriotism. Many of them are beautiful things. On the whole, however, he produced little or nothing in his last years to equal his earlier works. If his powers were failing, one can only say that in the middle thirties, a man's powers ought to be at their highest.

It is pleasant to turn from the contemplation of Burns's weaknesses and shortcomings to record that in his home he was a most tender and devoted and intelligent father. About six months before his death, the loss of his little daughter greatly afflicted him. His health had been poor for some time, and an attack of rheumatic fever left him very weak. But he wrote to a friend, "My physician assures me that melancholy and low spirits are half of my disease." He died, July 21, 1796, a broken man at the age of thirty-seven.

"His true life," says Lord Rosebery, "began with his death; with the body passed all that was gross and impure; the clear spirit stood revealed, and soared at once to its accepted place among the fixed stars in the firmament of the rare immortals." That accepted place is as the great national poet of Scotland. Scotchmen since have reverenced his memory and his poetry only "on this side idolatry." Carlyle shares the enthusiasm of his countrymen.

One mistake, however, Carlyle makes in regarding Burns as unique, in not connecting him definitely enough with his literary forerunners. As has been said before, Burns was well read in English literature;

naturally he was influenced by what he read. Addison, Pope, Gray, James Thomson, William Shenstone, and James Beattie were among his favorite authors. *The Cotter's Saturday Night* contains two quotations from Pope, and is full of reminiscences of Gray's *Elegy in a Country Churchyard.* But more important than Burns's relations to these writers in literary English was his indebtedness to earlier Scottish poets. For about a century before Burns there had been considerable interest in the production of poetry in the Scottish vernacular, that is, in the spoken dialect of the people, which differed in many respects from standard English. Most of the writers of this poetry were comparatively insignificant, but some of their poems were well worth preserving, and many of their songs were extraordinarily good.

The best-known poets among Burns's predecessors were Allan Ramsay and Robert Fergusson, twice mentioned in the *Essay on Burns.* The former had a considerable reputation in England as well as in Scotland. By collecting and printing a large number of Scottish songs and ballads, he not only preserved many poems that without his aid might have been lost, but also helped to create a taste for the vernacular poetry which undoubtedly prepared the way for the public appreciation of Burns. Fergusson, who was only nine years older than Burns and who died when he was twenty-four, had a good deal more ability than Carlyle seems to think. Burns, in his Preface to the First or Kilmarnock Edition of his poems, published in 1786, underestimated his own superiority to these two poets, but stated clearly and sufficiently his indebtedness to them: "But to the genius of a Ramsay, or the glorious dawnings of the poor unfortunate Fergusson, he [the author], with equal unaffected sincerity, declares, that even in his highest

pulse of vanity, he has not the most distant pretensions. These two justly admired Scotch poets he has often had in his eye in the following pieces; but rather with a view to kindle at their flame, than for servile imitation."

Burns, then, was not a great beginner or originator, but rather the culmination and climax of a line of poets who dealt with similar themes in similar ways. An instance of his relation to his predecessors may be found in the stanza-form used not only for *Poor Mailie's Elegy, To a Mouse, To a Mountain Daisy,* and *A Bard's Epitaph,* but for many others of Burns's poems. So much did Burns write in this form that it has been named the "Burns Stanza"; but, as a matter of fact, it was one of the favorite stanzas of Scottish poets before him. Burns has received more notice than these other poets, principally, of course, because he was a man of much greater genius; but also because he came at a time when readers were hungry for just the kind of poetry he offered them.

During the early years of the eighteenth century, English poetry was characterized by good sense, intelligence, and restraint; it dealt with moral themes, with criticisms of society, with town life; it was artificial, unemotional, unmusical. Pope is its leading exponent. Gradually as the century went on, dissatisfaction with this kind of poetry began to show itself in various ways. James Thomson in his *Seasons* turned away from the town and wrote about the fields and woods, the broad landscapes of the country. Thomas Gray in his *Elegy in a Country Churchyard* appealed to fundamental human emotions. Bishop Percy in his *Reliques of Ancient English Poetrie* collected and published many of the old ballads, which were not artificial and restrained, but natural and passionate. The latter part of the eighteenth century,

having become sentimental and romantic, wanted sentimental and romantic poetry; it wanted to "return to nature." Burns, when he came, gave it the sort of poetry that it had been craving; hence the enthusiasm with which he was received.

Carlyle analyzes Burns's poetry with considerable insight, but his analysis is not entirely systematic. We discover in Burns the following characteristics: (1) an exquisitely lyrical, that is, musical, quality; (2) a sincere feeling for nature; (3) an enthusiasm for humanity and the common man; (4) subject-matter dealing largely with rural life; (5) sympathy and tenderness; (6) romantic love; (7) natural and simple diction. These, with the possible exception of the last, are generally regarded as characteristics of the romantic movement, of which movement Burns was unquestionably a part. His influence on Wordsworth was acknowledged definitely by that poet. Carlyle, being an essentially romantic critic, is attracted by these qualities.

But there is something else in Burns besides the romantic elements. His humor, which Carlyle notes and admires, is by no means a trait of romanticism. Typical romantic poets, like Wordsworth and Shelley, are notably deficient in humor. Burns is a realist as well as a romanticist. Wordsworth idealized rural human nature; Burns saw it as it really was. It is a real peasant household of the better type that he presents in *The Cotter's Saturday Night;* it is a real peasant of a worse type that he presents in *Tam o' Shanter.* In dealing with nature also, he is rather realistic than romantic. As a farmer, he is intimately in contact with it; as a keen observer, he sees it vividly and interestedly. But it never occurs to him to love it in the abstract, to philosophize about its influence on the soul of man, or even to describe it much

except as a background for the human nature in which he is primarily interested. He is almost unique among English poets in his attitude toward animals. The sentimental poets, his contemporaries, were often much concerned about the humane treatment of animals. Burns has few theories on the subject; he simply talks to them and feels towards them as if they were human beings.

In one respect Burns belongs to the preceding age rather than to the Romantic Period which was just beginning. Like the earlier eighteenth-century poets, he was a master of satire. Limits of space and the nature of the subject-matter of Burns's satiric poems prevent any illustration of them in this book. Carlyle, who was not much interested in the form, has little to say about them, but they should not be overlooked.

The fact that Burns's best poems are written in the dialect of his native land instead of in literary English has been somewhat of a handicap to their appreciation among those who are puzzled by the peculiarities of the language. Even with this handicap many of Burns's songs have become popular throughout the English-speaking world, and in his own field the best critics have always placed him high.

The following quotation from a distinguished American scholar, Professor Alphonso G. Newcomer, shows him in substantial agreement with Carlyle as to the real excellence of Burns's work:

"Burns's essential originality is not for a moment to be questioned. He went straight to native sources,—to no Arcadian vale or Heliconian fount, but to Tarbolton and Mauchline, to the Lugar and the Cessnock. It is not in imagination alone that he sits by the ingle-cheek and eyes the upward curling smoke, not in a poem alone that the farmer salutes his old mare Maggie on a New Year's morning. We know that Holy Willie's name was really Willie; that the Tar-

bolton lassies lived there in the neighborhood, just as they are described; that Luath was his own dog; that it was an actual mouse, turned out of her nest by the plowshare, that he immortalized in pathetic rhyme. In a word, Burns was wholly *natural,* and the want of naturalness was the particular curse under which poetry had too long labored. . . And in the next and last place, Burns was wholly lyrical—a heaven-gifted, spontaneous, irrepressible singer. Every scene of his life and every feeling of his heart turned to song on his lips. Words marshaled themselves into tuneful measures, and rhymes came trooping at call . . . Greater poets England has had in number—she has had no more perfect singer."

(From a Thompson Print)

BIRTHPLACE OF THOMAS CARLYLE, ECCLEFECHAN

II

THOMAS CARLYLE

Few persons from birth and training were so well qualified as Carlyle to understand Burns. The circumstances of their early life were amazingly similar. On December 4, 1795, Thomas Carlyle was born in the village of Ecclefechan, less than fifteen miles from Dumfries, where Burns was then living and where eight months later he died. The house of James Carlyle, stone-mason, was only a little better than the dark, small, undecorated clay cottage of William Burnes, market-gardener, in Alloway. The poverty and piety, the "plain living and high thinking," of the two households almost exactly corresponded. Carlyle's mother was, like Burns's, an uneducated, devout, and noble-minded woman, to whom her children were devoted. Though she could read, it was only in later years that she learned to write in order to communicate with her sons when they were away from home; but writing always remained for her a laborious business. As to James Carlyle, the father, there can be little doubt that, when Carlyle writes so feelingly of Burns's father (¶41), he is thinking of his own. They were men of the same stamp. Carlyle wrote of his father after the latter's death, "The force that had been lent my father he honourably expended in manful well doing. A portion of this planet bears beneficent traces of his strong hand and strong heart. Nothing that he undertook to do but he did it faithfully and like a true man. . . I owe him much more than existence, I owe him a noble, inspiring example (now that I can read it in that rustic character). It was he *exclusively* that determined on *educating* me; that from his small hard-earned funds sent me to school

and college, and made me whatever I am or may become. Let me not mourn for my father, let me do worthily of him." In another place he said, "I have a sacred pride in my peasant father, and would not exchange him, even now, for any king known to me."

In the longer quotation just given may be noted the principal difference between Carlyle's early life and that of Burns: the education which the former had and the latter had not. The family at Ecclefechan had just that "little" of added prosperity which Carlyle desired for the Burns household (¶41), and which would have enabled "the boy Robert" to go to school, to 'struggle forward, as so many weaker men do, to some university.' When James Carlyle determined to make the necessary sacrifices to send his promising son, Thomas, away to school, a neighbor advised him not to do so, saying, "Educate a boy, and he grows up to despise his ignorant parents." Long afterwards, the father told this to his son and added, "Thou hast not done so, God be thanked for it."

Thomas was sent to school at Annan, not far from Ecclefechan, and later to the University of Edinburgh. He and a companion walked all the way to the city, more than sixty miles. His parents had hoped that he would become a minister, but he did not feel himself qualified for such work. Instead, when he left the university, he began to earn his own living as a teacher of mathematics. After a few years, however, he gave up teaching and went back to Edinburgh with rather indefinite notions of earning his living with his pen. While he was waiting to find congenial work, he lived principally on oatmeal sent from home. His scanty diet and irregular meals at this time left him a prey to chronic indigestion for the rest of his life. For a number of years he barely kept his head above water by making translations from the German, by

writing articles on German literature and other subjects for the magazines, and by employment as a tutor in a private family.

In 1826, he married a very intelligent and attractive young woman named Jane Welsh. Her father had been a surgeon and had left to his daughter a small estate; which, however, upon her marriage, she deeded over to her mother. This act was characteristic of the sturdy independence with which Carlyle and his wife faced the world. For a short time they set up housekeeping in an Edinburgh suburb, but in 1828 they took up their residence on a desolate moorland farm called Craigenputtock, where they could live with the utmost economy and where Carlyle could have the quiet that he found necessary for his work. Here the *Essay on Burns* was written as well as the later masterpiece, *Sartor Resartus,* and here Emerson came to visit them and formed a life-long friendship with his host.

It is during the crisis of the six hard years at Craigenputtock that the fundamental difference in character between Carlyle and Burns manifests itself. When we read in the *Essay* that Burns's "true loadstar" should have been "a life of Poetry, with Poverty, nay, with Famine if it must be so," we must remember that Carlyle is speaking out of the very midst of his own experience of a very similar life. When he wrote thus, the issue of his own struggle was still doubtful. He was determined to make his own way in the world, to find the work that he was best fitted for, and to do that work and no other. With the aid of his loyal wife he fought through a long series of difficulties and won finally a full measure of success and recognition. In comparing him with Burns at this point it may be said in partial excuse of the latter that Carlyle had no such passions and tempta-

tions to contend with in his own nature as had the poet.

In 1834, when Carlyle, shortly after the publication of his first book, *Sartor Resartus,* went up to London, he was a year older than Burns was when the latter died. In London he lived for the rest of his life, at a now famous house in Cheyne Row, Chelsea. *Sartor Resartus,* which means "the tailor re-tailored," is as unusual as its title. It claims to be the life-story of a German scholar, who invented a new philosophy called the "philosophy of clothes." The German scholar is entirely fictitious, but many of the details about him are really true of Carlyle himself. The book is a veiled spiritual autobiography, difficult to understand, but for those who can read it intelligently a beautiful and inspiring work.

Between 1834 and 1881, the date of his death, Carlyle produced a great many works. It would hardly be profitable to enumerate them all. *Heroes and Hero Worship* is a series of lectures on great men; in the fifth of these, Burns is dealt with again. Carlyle became famous as a historian and biographer through his *History of the French Revolution* and his lives of Oliver Cromwell and Frederick the Great. *Past and Present* and *Latter-Day Pamphlets* are severe criticisms of his own time; they might almost be called sermons addressed to the English people on what he called the "condition-of-England question."

In fact, though Carlyle disappointed his father and mother by not entering the ministry, he became in his later life a real preacher through his writings, and he greatly influenced the thought of the world by constantly hammering on certain ideas that he regarded as fundamental. The most valuable of these ideas and some of Carlyle's characteristic ways of expressing them follow:

I. The basic importance of religion, not of any particular religion, but of a religious attitude toward life. In *Heroes and Hero Worship,* he writes, "It is well said, in every sense, that a man's religion is the chief fact with regard to him. A man's, or a nation of men's. By religion I do not mean here the church-creed which he professes, the articles of faith which he will sign and, in words or otherwise, assert; not this wholly, in many cases not this at all. . . But the thing a man does practically believe (and this is often enough *without* asserting it even to himself, much less to others); the thing a man does practically lay to heart, and know for certain, concerning his vital relations to this mysterious Universe, and his duty and destiny there, that is in all cases the primary thing for him, and creatively determines all the rest."

II. The Gospel of Work. He expresses this in many places, but perhaps best in various sentences scattered through *Past and Present*: "Blessed is he who has found his work; let him ask no other blessedness. . . Older than all preached Gospels was this unpreached, inarticulate, but ineradicable, forever-enduring Gospel: Work, and therein have well-being . . . All true Work is sacred; in all true Work, were it but true hand-labour, there is something of divineness. Labour, wide as the Earth, has its summit in Heaven."

III. The emphatic rejection of the idea that happiness is the main aim of human life, and the setting up of duty and service in its place. In *Sartor Resartus* we find these words: "Has the word Duty no meaning; is what we call Duty no divine Messenger and Guide. . . ? Happiness of an approving Conscience! . . . there is in man a HIGHER than Love of Happiness: he can do without Happiness, and instead thereof find Blessedness! . . . Love not Pleasure; love God.

This is the EVERLASTING YEA, wherein all contradiction is solved."

IV. The proper attitude of reverence and obedience toward great men. These great men he called "Heroes" and the proper attitude toward them "Hero Worship." This he defines in the book so named: "Worship of a Hero is transcendent admiration of a Great Man. I say great men are still admirable; I say there is, at bottom, nothing else admirable! No nobler feeling than this of admiration for one higher than himself dwells in the breast of man . . . Society is founded on Hero-worship . . . The most significant feature in the history of an epoch is the manner it has of welcoming a Great Man."

III

THE ESSAY ON BURNS

Carlyle's *Essay on Burns* first appeared in the *Edinburgh Review* in 1828, ostensibly as a review of a recently published *Life of Robert Burns* by John Gibson Lockhart. Lockhart, Sir Walter Scott's son-in-law, is chiefly remembered now for his *Life of Scott*, (1838), one of the best biographies ever written. His *Life of Burns* was a much smaller work, both in size and in importance, though it was, as Carlyle indicates, the most satisfactory study of the poet produced up to that time.

Carlyle was more interested in Burns than he was in anything that Lockhart had written about Burns, and it has been customary to say that after the brief, perfunctory discussion in the first four paragraphs, he drops all consideration of Lockhart's book, except for the three rather long quotations later, one at second-hand from Sir Walter Scott. This statement, true in a way, is misleading. Every fact of Burns's life which Carlyle mentions, every reference that he makes to the poet's own words or to the opinions of others about him, is taken directly from Lockhart. Not only so, but practically all the topics discussed in the *Essay* owe their suggestion, in one way or another, to Lockhart's book. This is not to imply that Carlyle is not original; he is. But he is more indebted to Lockhart than has been generally recognized.

To show this indebtedness in detail would take a long time. A few examples will suffice.

(1) In paragraph 30 of the *Essay,* Carlyle in discussing *Tam o' Shanter* is answering Lockhart, who says, "To the last, Burns was of opinion that *Tam o' Shanter* was the best of his productions; and . . . I

believe the decision has been all but unanimously approved of . . . No poet, with the exception of Shakespeare, ever possessed the power of exciting the most varied and discordant emotions with such rapid transitions." Note what Carlyle says about "Shakspearean" qualities.

(2) Lockhart praises *The Jolly Beggars* almost as emphatically as does Carlyle in Paragraph 31: "I know nothing but the *Tam o' Shanter* that is calculated to convey so high an impression of what Burns might have done . . .*Beggar's Bush* and *Beggar's Opera* sink into tameness in the comparison." Note Carlyle's reference to this statement.

(3) In paragraphs 34 and 35 Carlyle deals with "Burns's influence . . . as exerted specially on the Literature of his country, at least on the Literature of Scotland." Lockhart devotes three pages (pp. 316-318 in the Edinburgh edition of 1830) to the influence of Burns "in reviving and strengthening the national feelings of his countrymen." The details of the two discussions differ.

(4) In paragraph 46 Carlyle writes, "Certain of his [Burns's] admirers have felt scandalized at his ever resolving to gauge." This was probably suggested by Lockhart's question, "Who can open the pages of Burns, and remember without a blush, that the author of such verses, the human being whose breast glowed with such feelings, was doomed to earn mere bread for his children by casting up the stock of publicans' cellars and riding over moors and mosses in quest of smuggling stills?" Lockhart, however, is scandalized at the public, who should have prevented him from becoming "a common gauger," rather than at Burns's resolve to support his family in this way.

(5) Carlyle's entire discussion in paragraph 54 is aimed at a "class of Burns's admirers, who accuse the

higher ranks among us of having ruined Burns by their selfish neglect of him." This accusation is implied in several passages of Lockhart's biography.

(6) The elaborate comparison which Carlyle makes between Burns and Byron in paragraphs 63 and 64 was undoubtedly suggested to him by Lockhart's brief reference to the resemblance between the two poets "on many points," specifically in their attitude towards religion.

This study of the relation between the *Essay* and the book which occasioned it might be continued to considerable length, but enough has been said to show that the connection is closer than has usually been recognized. Still the main values of the *Essay* are entirely independent of its ostensible purpose as a review of Lockhart's biography.

These main values may be analyzed somewhat as follows:

1. The most obvious is that Carlyle's estimate of Burns as a man and as a poet is worth getting and understanding. That Carlyle from his birth and training was peculiarly fitted to make such an estimate has already been indicated. If anybody could appreciate Burns's difficulties and the qualities of his work, he could. People have taken a great interest in Burns and have been much puzzled about him. They have asked many questions: Was he really a great poet? If so, why? How far was his life a failure? What was the cause of that failure? Was it his fault? Or was he an innocent victim of circumstances? Or was the public of the time definitely to blame? All these questions Carlyle answers, and the *Essay* is worth reading, to find out how he answers them.

2. It has been claimed by a number of superior critics that Carlyle was the greatest man of letters in England during the middle years of the nineteenth

century. Certainly he was one of the greatest. For a student it is interesting to know what such a man thought about literature. What, according to Carlyle, is the proper subject-matter to write about? What are the greatest and most desirable qualities in literary work? The answers to these questions can be found in the *Essay on Burns*.

3. Professor Dawson in his *Literary Leaders of Modern England* says of Carlyle, "His mind was also one of the most fertile of minds; not so much in the matter of industrious production as in the much rarer function of begetting great seminal ideas, which reproduced themselves over the entire area of modern literature." Seminal ideas are ideas that act like seeds, so that planted in other minds they grow and produce more ideas. Many thinking men and women alive to-day think as they do because Carlyle thought and wrote as he did, though they may never have read any of Carlyle's works. His influence has been passed on from mind to mind, so that his philosophy is still a power in the world. That philosophy is set forth in *Sartor Resartus,* in *Past and Present,* and in *Heroes and Hero Worship,* more completely than in the *Essay on Burns,* but those three books are much longer, and the first two are very difficult reading. The student who approaches Carlyle for the first time can find in the *Essay* some of its author's most significant ideas. If he reads carefully, he will be able to answer this question: What did Carlyle regard as the most important things in life?

4. Not only was Carlyle a great thinker, but he was also a great writer of English prose. W. C. Brownell in his *Victorian Prose Masters* says of him: "In expression . . . perhaps prose has not had a greater master. He could say anything he wanted to and with extraordinary energy." In some of his books, espec-

ially in those produced during his later years, the peculiarities of his style are so marked as to be rather a barrier to the expression of his thought. These peculiarities consist in (1) an unusual use of capitals for the purpose of emphasis, (2) an abundance of exclamations and questions directly addressed to the reader, (3) incomplete constructions and fragmentary sentences, (4) inventions of compound words, (5) foreign words and words in peculiar senses, (6) the use of stock phrases and nick-names. In the *Essay on Burns* these peculiarities are not much in evidence, but some instances of them may be found.

On the whole, the style of the *Essay* is exceedingly good. To be noticed especially are Carlyle's very vivid and picturesque figures of speech; these are not ornaments laid on from the outside, but are sum and substance of his thought, not to be disentangled from the thought without destroying it. Note, for example, how figure after figure appears in paragraph 44: "The conduct of Burns under *this dazzling blaze of favour;* . . . In his unexampled situation the young peasant is not a moment perplexed; *so many strange lights do not confuse him, do not lead him astray* . . . He had seen *the gay and the gorgeous arena,* in which the powerful are born to *play their parts;* . . . and he felt more bitterly than ever, that here he was but *a looker-on,* and had *no part or lot in that splendid game* . . . But so it is with many men: We *'long for the merchandise, yet would fain keep the price';* and so *stand chaffering with Fate,* in vexatious altercation, till *the night come,* and *our fair is over!*" When one reads such passages, one remembers what Carlyle wrote about his father: "None of us will ever forget that bold glowing style of his, flowing free from his untutored soul, full of metaphors (though he knew not what a metaphor was) with all manner of potent words which he appropriated

and applied with a surprising accuracy." It was from old James Carlyle, the stonemason, that his gifted son got his figurative style. It would be an unprofitable waste of time to pick out and identify all Carlyle's figures of speech, but it would be a pity not to recognize how much they add of effectiveness and beauty; they are like a running commentary of pictures in the margin.

The *Essay on Burns* is full of quotations. Some of these are from Lockhart, some from Burns himself, some from sources not given and in many cases difficult to recognize. Carlyle was scrupulous in his use of quotation marks; whenever he suspected that a phrase was derived from something he had read he enclosed it in quotes, even though he might be altering the wording so much as to make it really his own. He wrote from a wide background of reading and out of a full mind. The reader who comes to the *Essay* with a very limited background will not always understand or appreciate Carlyle's allusions to great names or his use of memorable phrases, but for the experienced these constitute part of the charm. Most important of all books in the making of Carlyle's style was the Bible. The Bible was *the* book in the household of a Scotch peasant in those days, and Thomas Carlyle and Robert Burns were alike familiar with it. Entirely apart from its religious significance, the English Bible in what is known as the Authorized Version has been of great importance in moulding the language of many of our great writers; no better English can be found anywhere. Carlyle was saturated with it. He uses its phrases freely and often alludes to its stories. Attention will be called in the notes to the most noteworthy of these references, but the influence of the Bible on the diction and cadence of

Carlyle's sentences cannot be measured by the number of biblical allusions to be found in the text.

The *Essay on Burns* is unquestionably harder to read than a short story or a simple poem or a novel would be. It contains, however, no great difficulties, and whatever labor is involved in mastering it ought to be well repaid by acquiring and understanding its ideas. If we never read anything that demands intellectual exercise, our minds will be as soft as the teeth of those people who live only on mush and sugar. To the intelligent and mentally active student, a book with real ideas in it like the *Essay on Burns* offers a genuine enlargement of life.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

The text of this edition of the *Essay on Burns* is that of the second London edition of 1842, containing Carlyle's revisions and additions; a few obvious misprints have been corrected from the original *Edinburgh Review* edition. The punctuation, apparently Carlyle's own, is rather peculiar; its chief regular differences from present-day usage consist in the use of commas to set off restrictive adjective clauses and noun clauses in the predicate.

References to Lockhart's *Life of Burns* are to the third edition, Edinburgh, 1830; a more accessible edition of Lockhart's *Life* is in the *Everyman's Library.* Perhaps the best recent biography of Burns is *The Truth about Burns,* by D. McNaught, Glasgow, 1921. Further interesting material on Burns may be found in *Robert Burns, How to Know Him,* by William Allan Neilson, Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1917; *The Ayrshire Homes and Haunts of Burns,* by Henry C. Shelley, Putnam's, 1897; *The Correspondence of Robert Burns and Mrs. Frances Dunlop,* edited by William Wallace, 2 vols., N. Y., 1898; *Robert Burns,* by Sir George Douglas and W. S. Crockett, London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1904; *Familiar Studies of Men and Books,* by Robert Louis Stevenson, Scribner's, 1891, pp. 59-103, "Some Aspects of Robert Burns"; *A Survey of English Literature,* 1780-1880, 4 vols., by Oliver Elton, Macmillan, 1912-20, Vol. I, Chap. IV, "Robert Burns"; *Cambridge History of English Literature,* Vol. XI, "Burns and Lesser Scottish Verse," by T. F. Henderson. Of considerable interest is John Drinkwater's play, *Robert Burns,* Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1925.

Those interested in Burns's forerunners may pursue the subject further in *Scottish Vernacular Literature,* by T. F. Henderson, London, 1898. Many of the beautiful songs and ballads that constituted a great part of Burns's intellectual nourishment are printed in the *Edinburgh Book of Scottish Verse.*

Books and articles about Carlyle are bewildering in their number and variety. The standard biographies are those by John Nichol in the *English Men of Letters Series,* Harper, 1892, and by Richard Garnett, London, W. Scott, 1897. A

monumental biography by David A. Wilson is in process of publication by Dutton, four large volumes having already appeared: *Carlyle till Marriage*, 1923; *Carlyle to the French Revolution*, 1924; *Carlyle on Cromwell and Others*, 1925; *Carlyle at his zenith*, 1927. These volumes are full of picturesque anecdotes and human touches; the first especially contains much that would be of interest to young readers. Other useful books are the following: *Thomas Carlyle, How to Know Him*, by Bliss Perry, Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1915; *In Cheyne Walk and Thereabout*, by Reginald Blunt, Lippincott, 1914; *Victorian Prose Masters*, by W. C. Brownell, Scribner's, 1901, pp. 49-96; *Obiter Dicta, Series One*, by Augustine Birrell, Scribner's, 1897, pp. 1-54 (also in *Collected Essays and Addresses*, Dent, 1922, Vol. 2, pp. 29-55); *Makers of Modern Prose*, by W. J. Dawson, Whittaker, 1899, pp. 169-207; *Varied Types*, by G. K. Chesterton, Dodd, Mead and Co., 1903, pp. 109-23; *Literature in a Changing Age*, A. H. Thorndike, Macmillan, 1920, pp. 70-93; *A Survey of English Literature*, 1780-1880, by Oliver Elton, Vol. III, Chap. II; *Cambridge History of English Literature*, Vol. XIII, Chap. I, "Carlyle," by J. G. Robertson. Of very special interest to young readers are the introductory essay in Thomas Wentworth Higginson's *Carlyle's Laugh and Other Surprises*, Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1909, and John Burroughs's three essays on Carlyle, "In Carlyle's Country," "A Sunday in Cheyne Row," and "Dr. Johnson and Carlyle," the first two in *Fresh Fields*, Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1894, the third in *Indoor Studies*, Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1889. A recent very valuable book, *Carlyle and Mill*, by Emery E. Neff, Columbia University Press, 1924, is probably beyond the intelligence of most high-school students. Nine volumes of Carlyle's letters have been published under various titles; any of these are worth reading or dipping into, but perhaps the most intrinsically interesting are *The Correspondence of Thomas Carlyle and Ralph Waldo Emerson*, edited by C. E. Norton, 2 vols., Boston, 1883. *Carlyle's Reminiscences*, edited by James Anthony Froude, 1881, though its publication was a betrayal of confidence on

the part of the editor, has much that is worth while in it, especially Carlyle's account of his father.

Note: Proper names not explained in the foot-notes may be found in the Glossary, to which have been relegated two classes of names: (1) those which the more intelligent of the class may be expected to know; (2) those which it is not necessary to understand in order to get the fundamental meaning of the text.

Burns

1. In the modern arrangements of society, it is no uncommon thing that a man of genius must, like Butler, 'ask for bread and receive a stone';[1] for, in spite of our grand maxim of supply and demand,[2] it is by no means the highest excellence that men are most forward to recognise. The inventor of a spinning-jenny is pretty sure of his reward in his own day;[3] but the writer of a true poem, like the apostle of a true religion, is nearly as sure of the contrary. We do not know whether it is not an aggravation of the injustice, that there is generally a posthumous retribution. Robert Burns, in the course of Nature, might yet have been living; but his short life was spent in toil and penury; and he died, in the prime of his manhood, miserable and neglected; and yet already a brave mausoleum shines over his dust, and more than one splendid monument has been reared in other places to his fame: the street where he languished in poverty is called by his name; the highest personages in our literature have been proud to appear as his commentators and admirers, and here is the *sixth* narrative of his *Life* that has been given to the world!

2. Mr. Lockhart thinks it necessary to apologise for this new attempt on such a subject: but his read-

[1]Matthew VII, 9. Not exactly quoted; Carlyle quotes from memory, and is seldom strictly accurate.

[2]The fundamental principle in political economy, that what is scarcest and most useful will receive the highest price. As men of genius are rare and of great value, they ought to be highly paid, but are not. Carlyle was very scornful of political economy.

[3]James Hargreaves, an English weaver, who died in 1778, invented a machine for spinning cotton, which he named the "spinning-jenny" after his wife. As a matter of fact, he was not adequately rewarded, but remained a poor man.

ers, we believe, will readily acquit him; or, at worst, will censor only the performance of his task, not the choice of it. The character of Burns, indeed, is a theme that cannot easily become either trite or exhausted; and will probably gain rather than lose in its dimensions by the distance to which it is removed by Time. No man, it has been said, is a hero to his valet: and this is probably true; but the fault is at least as likely to be the valet's as the hero's. For it is certain, that to the vulgar eye few things are wonderful that are not distant. It is difficult for men to believe that the man, the mere man whom they see, nay perhaps painfully feel, toiling at their side through the poor jostlings of existence, can be made of finer clay than themselves. Suppose that some dining acquaintance of Sir Thomas Lucy's, and neighbour of John a Combe's,[1] had snatched an hour or two from the preservation of his game, and written us a Life of Shakespeare! What dissertations should we not have had, —not on *Hamlet* and *The Tempest*, but on the wool-trade, and deer-stealing, and the libel and vagrant laws; and how the Poacher became a Player; and how

[1]Sir Thomas Lucy owned the estate of Charlecote Hall, near Stratford, in the time of Shakespeare, who is said to have got into trouble with Sir Thomas for killing deer in his park. The "vagrant law," or, more properly, the "vagrancy law," would apply to Shakespeare as an idle youth trespassing on another man's land; the "libel law," because he is reported to have written a ballad ridiculing Lucy and to have used him as the original for Justice Shallow, a comic figure in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. John a Combe was a citizen of Stratford, from whom Shakespeare purchased land; he is said to have been a usurer. Tradition ascribes to Shakespeare a satirical epitaph on him. He was apparently in the wool business.

Sir Thomas and Mr. John had Christian bowels,[1] and did not push him to extremities! In like manner, we believe, with respect to Burns, that till the companions of his pilgrimage, the Honourable Excise Commissioners, and the Gentlemen of the Caledonian Hunt, and the Dumfries Aristocracy, and all the Squires and Earls, equally with the Ayr Writers, and the New and Old Light Clergy,[2] whom he had to do with, shall have become invisible in the darkness of the Past, or visible only by light borrowed from *his* juxtaposition, it will be difficult to measure him by any true standard, or to estimate what he really was and did, in the eighteenth century, for his country and the world. It will be difficult, we say; but still a fair problem for literary historians; and repeated attempts will give us repeated approximations.

3. His former Biographers have done something, no doubt, but by no means a great deal, to assist us. Dr. Currie and Mr. Walker,[3] the principal of these writers, have both, we think, mistaken one essentially important thing: Their own and the world's true relation to their author, and the style in which it be-

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[1]A curious phrase, based on various passages in the Bible and derived from the ancient Hebrew notion that the bowels were the seat of pity and tenderness.

[2]The Excise Commissioners were those to whom Burns was responsible in his office of Exciseman; the Gentlemen of the Caledonian Hunt were an aristocratic club of Edinburgh to whom he dedicated the Edinburgh edition of his poems; "Writers" is a Scotch term for lawyers. The Old Light Clergy represented the rigid, orthodox wing of the Scottish church or kirk; the New Lights were the liberal theologians. Burns identified himself with the latter and opposed the former.

[3]Currie's biography of Burns was prefixed to an edition of his works published in 1800; Walker's appeared in 1811.

came such men to think and to speak of such a man. Dr. Currie loved the poet truly; more perhaps than he avowed to his readers, or even to himself; yet he everywhere introduces him with a certain patronizing, apologetic air; as if the polite public might think it strange and half unwarrantable that he, a man of science, a scholar, and gentleman, should do such honour to a rustic. In all this, however, we readily admit that his fault was not want of love, but weakness of faith; and regret that the first and kindest of all our poet's biographers should not have seen farther, or believed more boldly what he saw. Mr. Walker offends more deeply in the same kind: and both err alike in presenting us with a detached catalogue of his several supposed attributes, virtues, and vices, instead of a delineation of the resulting character as a living unity. This, however, is not painting a portrait; but gauging the length and breadth of the several features, and jotting down their dimensions in arithmetical ciphers. Nay, it is not so much as this: for we are yet to learn by what arts or instruments the mind *could* be so measured and gauged.

4. Mr. Lockhart, we[1] are happy to say, has avoided both these errors. He uniformly treats Burns as the high and remarkable man the public voice has now pronounced him to be: and in delineating him, he has avoided the method of separate generalities, and rather sought for characteristic incidents, habits, actions, sayings; in a word, for aspects which exhibit the whole man, as he looked and lived among his fellows. The book accordingly, with all its deficiencies, gives more insight, we think, into the true character of Burns, than any prior biography: though, being written on

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[1] The "editorial we": used throughout to mean Carlyle himself.

the very popular and condensed scheme of an article for *Constable's Miscellany,* it has less depth than we could have wished and expected from a writer of such power; and contains rather more, and more multifarious, quotations, than belong of right to an original production. Indeed, Mr. Lockhart's own writing is generally so good, so clear, direct and nervous, that we seldom wish to see it making place for another man's. However, the spirit of the work is throughout candid, tolerant, and anxiously conciliating; compliments and praises are liberally distributed, on all hands, to great and small; and, as Mr. Morris Birkbeck observes of the society in the backwoods of America, 'the courtesies of polite life are never lost sight of for a moment.' But there are better things than these in the volume; and we can safely testify, not only that it is easily and pleasantly read a first time, but may even be without difficulty read again.

5. Nevertheless, we are far from thinking that the problem of Burns's Biography has yet been adequately solved. We do not allude so much to deficiency of facts or documents,—though of these we are still every day receiving some fresh accession,—as to the limited and imperfect application of them to the great end of Biography. Our notions upon this subject may perhaps appear extravagant; but if an individual is really of consequence enough to have his life and character recorded for public remembrance, we have always been of opinion, that the public ought to be made acquainted with all the inward springs and relations of his character. How did the world and man's life, from his particular position, represent themselves to his mind? How did coexisting circumstances modify him from without; how did he modify these from within? With what endeavours and what efficacy rule over them; with what resistance and

what suffering sink under them? In one word, what and how produced was the effect of society on him; what and how produced was his effect on society? He who should answer these questions, in regard to any individual, would, as we believe, furnish a model of perfection in Biography. Few individuals, indeed, can deserve such a study; and many *lives* will be written, and, for the gratification of innocent curiosity, ought to be written, and read, and forgotten, which are not in this sense *biographies*. But Burns, if we mistake not, is one of these few individuals; and such a study, at least with such a result, he has not yet obtained. Our own contributions to it, we are aware, can be but scanty and feeble; but we offer them with good-will, and trust they may meet with acceptance from those they are intended for.

6. Burns first came upon the world as a prodigy; and was, in that character, entertained by it, in the usual fashion, with loud, vague, tumultuous wonder, speedily subsiding into censure and neglect; till his early and most mournful death again awakened an enthusiasm for him, which, especially as there was now nothing to be done, and much to be spoken, has prolonged itself even to our own time. It is true, the 'nine days'[1] have long since elapsed; and the very continuance of this clamour proves that Burns was no vulgar wonder. Accordingly, even in sober judgments, where, as years passed by, he has come to rest more and more exclusively on his own intrinsic merits, and may now be well-nigh shorn of that casual[2] radiance, he appears not only as a true British poet, but

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[1]Referring to the proverbial expression that an extraordinary thing is a "nine days' wonder."

[2]Accidental; due to chance. The idea is that Burns's enduring fame does not owe much to the facts that he was a

as one of the most considerable British men of the eighteenth century. Let it not be objected that he did little. He did much, if we consider where and how. If the work performed was small, we must remember that he had his very materials to discover; for the metal he worked in lay hid under the desert moor, where no eye but his had guessed its existence; and we may almost say, that with his own hand he had to construct the tools for fashioning it. For he found himself in deepest obscurity, without help, without instruction, without model; or with models only of the meanest sort. An educated man stands, as it were, in the midst of a boundless arsenal and magazine, filled with all the weapons and engines which man's skill has been able to devise from the earliest time; and he works, accordingly, with a strength borrowed from all past ages. How different is *his* state who stands on the outside of that storehouse, and feels that its gates must be stormed, or remain for ever shut against him! His means are the commonest and rudest; the mere work done is no measure of his strength. A dwarf behind his steam-engine may remove mountains; but no dwarf will hew them down with a pickaxe; and he must be a Titan that hurls them abroad with his arms.

7. It is in this last shape that Burns presents himself. Born in an age the most prosaic Britain had yet seen,[1] and in a condition the most disadvantageous, where his mind, if it accomplished aught, must accomplish it under the pressure of continual bodily toil,

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peasant with few opportunities and that he led an unfortunate life—both facts more or less *accidental*, that is, not essential to his true value.

[1]Carlyle, like many nineteenth-century writers, can see little good in the eighteenth century and is habitually unfair to it.

nay of penury and desponding apprehension of the worst evils, and with no furtherance but such knowledge as dwells in a poor man's hut, and the rhymes of a Ferguson or Ramsay[1] for his standard of beauty, he sinks not under all these impediments: through the fogs and darkness of that obscure region, his lynx eye discerns the true relations of the world and human life; he grows into intellectual strength, and trains himself into intellectual expertness. Impelled by the expansive movement of his own irrepressible soul, he struggles forward into the general view; and with haughty modesty lays down before us, as the fruit of his labour, a gift which Time has now pronounced imperishable. Add to all this, that his darksome, drudging childhood and youth was by far the kindliest era of his whole life; and that he died in his thirty-seventh year; and then ask, If it be strange that his poems are imperfect, and of small extent, or that his genius attained no mastery in its art? Alas, his Sun shone as through a tropical tornado; and the pale Shadow of Death eclipsed it at noon! Shrouded in such baleful vapours, the genius of Burns was never seen in clear azure splendour, enlightening the world:

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[1]Allen Ramsay (1686-1758) was of great service to literature in collecting many old Scottish songs and ballads; he also wrote himself in the Scottish dialect. Robert Fergusson —the more usual spelling—was an Edinburgh poet, 1750-1774, to whom Burns was greatly indebted. These two men were the most important before Burns in the so-called "Scottish vernacular revival," that is, the movement to write poetry to be read as well as songs to be sung in the spoken dialect of Scotland. Burns, like Shakespeare, was not a solitary figure, but the greatest poet in a group numbering several writers of beautiful lyrics. Carlyle underestimates the worth of Burns's forerunners and the extent of his debt to them. Burns himself acknowledged the debt handsomely.

but some beams from it did, by fits, pierce through; and it tinted those clouds with rainbow and orient colors, into a glory and stern grandeur, which men silently gazed on with wonder and tears!

8. We are anxious not to exaggerate; for it is exposition rather than admiration that our readers require of us here; and yet to avoid some tendency to that side is no easy matter. We love Burns, and we pity him; and love and pity are prone to magnify. Criticism, it is sometimes thought, should be a cold business; we are not so sure of this; but, at all events, our concern with Burns is not exclusively that of critics. True and genial as his poetry must appear, it is not chiefly as a poet, but as a man, that he interests and affects us. He was often advised to write a tragedy: time and means were not lent him for this; but through life he enacted a tragedy, and one of the deepest. We question whether the world has since witnessed so utterly sad a scene; whether Napoleon himself, left to brawl with Sir Hudson Lowe, and perish on his rock, 'amid the melancholy main,'[1] presented to the reflecting mind such a 'spectacle of pity and fear'[2] as did this intrinsically nobler, gentler, and perhaps greater soul, wasting itself away in a hopeless struggle with base entanglements, which coiled closer and closer round him, till only death opened him an outlet. Conquerors are a class of men with whom, for most part, the world could well dispense; nor can the hard intellect, the unsympathising loftiness, and high but selfish enthusiasm of such persons, inspire us in general with any affection; at best it may excite amazement; and their fall, like that of a pyramid, will be beheld with a certain sadness and

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[1]From James Thomson's *Castle of Indolence*, I, 30.

[2]Aristotle's phrase to express the emotions aroused by a true tragic drama.

awe. But a true Poet, a man in whose heart resides some effluence of Wisdom, some tone of the 'Eternal Melodies,' is the most precious gift that can be bestowed on a generation: we see in him a freer, purer development of whatever is noblest in ourselves; his life is a rich lesson to us, and we mourn his death, as that of a benefactor who loved and taught us.

9. Such a gift had Nature in her bounty bestowed on us in Robert Burns; but with queenlike indifference she cast it from her hand, like a thing of no moment; and it was defaced and torn asunder, as an idle bauble, before we recognised it. To the ill-starred Burns was given the power of making man's life more venerable, but that of wisely guiding his own life was not given. Destiny,—for so in our ignorance we must speak,—his faults, the faults of others, proved too hard for him; and that spirit which might have soared, could it but have walked, soon sank to the dust, its glorious faculties trodden under foot in the blossom; and died, we may almost say, without ever having lived. And so kind and warm a soul; so full of inborn riches, of love to all living and lifeless things! How his heart flows out in sympathy over universal Nature; and in her bleakest provinces discerns a beauty and a meaning! The 'Daisy' falls not unheeded under his plowshare; nor the ruined nest of that 'wee, cowering, timorous beastie,' cast forth, after all its provident pains, to 'thole the sleety dribble, and cranreuch cauld.'[1] The 'hoar visage' of Winter delights him: he dwells with a sad and oft-returning fondness in these scenes of solemn desolation; but the voice of the tempest becomes an anthem to his ears; he loves to walk in the sounding woods, for 'it raises his thoughts

[1]See Burns's poems, "To a Mountain Daisy" and "To a Mouse."

to *Him that walketh on the wings of the wind.*"[1] A true Poet-soul, for it needs but to be struck, and the sound it yields will be music! But observe him chiefly as he mingles with his brother men. What warm, all-comprehending fellow-feeling; what trustful, boundless love; what generous exaggeration of the object loved! His rustic friend, his nut-brown maiden, are no longer mean and homely, but a hero and a queen, whom he prizes as the paragons of Earth. The rough scenes of Scottish life, not seen by him in any Arcadian illusion,[2] but in the rude contradiction, in the smoke and soil of a too harsh reality, are still lovely to him: Poverty is indeed his companion, but Love also, and Courage; the simple feelings, the worth, the nobleness, that dwell under the straw roof, are dear and venerable to his heart: and thus over the lowest provinces of man's existence he pours the glory of his own soul; and they rise, in shadow and sunshine, softened and brightened into a beauty which other eyes discern not in the highest. He has a just self-consciousness, which too often degenerates into

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[1]Lockhart (p. 269) quotes from a letter of Burns: "There is scarcely any earthly object gives me more—I do not know if I should call it pleasure—but something which exalts me, something which enraptures me—than to walk in the sheltered side of a wood in a cloudy winter day, and hear the stormy wind, howling among the trees, and raving over the plain. It is my best season for devotion: My mind is wrapt up in a kind of enthusiasm to *Him*, who, in the language of the Hebrew Bard, 'walks on the wings of the wind'."

[2]Arcadia was a district in southern Greece, idealized as the home of happy, innocent shepherds and the imagined scene of many pastoral poems. It is a symbol of romance; "Arcadian illusion" is equivalent to a romantic and unreal view of country life.

pride; yet it is a noble pride, for defence,[1] not for offence; no cold, suspicious feeling, but a frank and social one. The Peasant Poet bears himself, we might say, like a King in exile: he is cast among the low, and feels himself equal to the highest; yet he claims no rank, that none may be disputed to him. The forward he can repel, the supercilious he can subdue; pretensions of wealth or ancestry are of no avail with him; there is a fire in that dark eye, under which the 'insolence of condescension' cannot thrive. In his abasement, in his extreme need, he forgets not for a moment the majesty of Poetry and Manhood. And yet, far as he feels himself above common men, he wanders not apart from them, but mixes warmly in their interests; nay, throws himself into their arms; and, as it were, entreats them to love him. It is moving to see how, in his darkest despondency, this proud being still seeks relief from friendship; unbosoms himself, often to the unworthy: and, amid tears, strains to his glowing heart a heart that knows only the name of friendship. And yet he was 'quick to learn;'[2] a man of keen vision, before whom common disguises afforded no concealment. His understanding saw through the hollowness even of accomplished deceivers; but there was a generous credulity in his heart. And so did our Peasant show himself among us; 'a soul like an Æolian harp, in whose strings the vulgar wind, as it passed

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[1]Carlyle probably has in mind Dr. Johnson's famous words quoted by Boswell in his *Life of Johnson*, under the date 1754: "'Sir (said Johnson) that is not Lord Chesterfield; he is the proudest man this day existing.' 'No (said Dr. Adams) there is one person, at least, as proud; I think, by your own account, you are the prouder man of the two.' 'But mine (replied Johnson instantly) was *defensive* pride'." Carlyle, like Burns, had a good deal of this pride.

[2]See Burns's poem, "A Bard's Epitaph."

through them, changed itself into articulate melody."[1] And this was he for whom the world found no fitter business than quarreling with smugglers and vintners, computing excise-dues upon tallow, and gauging ale-barrels! In such toils was that mightly Spirit sorrowfully wasted: and a hundred years may pass on, before another such is given us to waste.

10. All that remains of Burns, the Writings he has left, seem to us, as we hinted above, no more than a poor mutilated fraction of what was in him; brief, broken glimpses of a genius that could never show itself complete; that wanted all things for completeness: culture, leisure, true effort, nay even length of life. His poems are, with scarcely any exception, mere occasional effusions; poured forth with little premeditation; expressing, by such means as offered, the passion, opinion, or humour of the hour. Never in one instance was it permitted him to grapple with any subject with the full collection of his strength, to fuse and mould it in the concentrated fire of his genius. To try by the strict rules of Art such imperfect fragments, would be at once unprofitable and unfair. Nevertheless, there is something in these poems, marred and defective as they are, which forbids the most fastidious student of poetry to pass them by. Some sort of enduring quality they must have: for, after fifty years of the wildest vicissitudes in poetic taste,[2] they still continue to be read; nay, are read more and

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[1]An Aeolian harp is played on by the wind. Possibly this comparison was suggested to Carlyle by Burns's words in the letter to Mrs. Dunlop quoted by Lockhart (p. 197) and requoted by Carlyle in paragraph 22.

[2]Vicissitudes are changes, especially complete changes, of condition or circumstances. During the fifty years before 1828, the great change took place from classicism to romanticism in English poetry.

more eagerly, more and more extensively; and this not only by literary virtuosos,[1] and that class upon whom transitory causes operate most strongly, but by all classes, down to the most hard, unlettered, and truly natural class, who read little, and especially no poetry, except because they find pleasure in it. The grounds of so singular and wide a popularity, which extends, in a literal sense, from the palace to the hut, and over all regions where the English tongue is spoken, are well worth inquiring into. After every just deduction, it seems to imply some rare excellence in these works. What is that excellence?

11. To answer this question will not lead us far. The excellence of Burns is, indeed, among the rarest, whether in poetry or prose; but, at the same time, it is plain and easily recognised: his *Sincerity*,[2] his indisputable air of Truth. Here are no fabulous woes or joys; no hollow fantastic sentimentalities; no wire-drawn refinings, either in thought or feeling: the passion that is traced before us has glowed in a living heart; the opinion he utters has risen in his own understanding, and been a light to his own steps. He

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[1]Virtuosos are persons possessed of a critical knowledge of the fine arts, here of poetry; Carlyle thinks of them as setting the fashion in literary taste.

[2]Carlyle constantly hammered on this idea. Compare what he says in *Heroes and Hero Worship*, "The Hero as Prophet": "But of a Great Man especially, of him I will venture to assert that it is incredible he should have been other than true. It seems to me the primary foundation of him, and of all that can lie in him, this. No Mirabeau, Napoleon, Burns, Cromwell, no man adequate to do anything, but is first of all in right earnest about it; what I call a sincere man. I should say *sincerity*, a deep, great, genuine sincerity, is the first characteristic of all men in any way heroic."

does not write from hearsay, but from sight and experience; it is the scenes that he has lived and laboured amidst, that he describes: those scenes, rude and humble as they are, have kindled beautiful emotions in his soul, noble thoughts, and definite resolves; and he speaks forth what is in him, not from any outward call of vanity or interest, but because his heart is too full to be silent. He speaks it with such melody and modulation as he can; 'in homely rustic jingle;' but it is his own, and genuine. This is the grand secret for finding readers and retaining them: let him who would move and convince others, be first moved and convinced himself. Horace's rule, *Si vis me flere*,[1] is applicable in a wider sense than the literal one. To every poet, to every writer, we might say: Be true, if you would be believed. Let a man speak forth with genuine earnestness the thought, the emotion, the actual condition of his own heart; and other men, so strangely are we all knit together by the tie of sympathy, must and will give heed to him. In culture, in extent of view, we may stand above the speaker, or below him; but in either case, his words, if they are earnest and sincere, will find some response within us; for in spite of all casual varieties in outward rank or inward, as face answers to face, so does the heart of man to man.

12. This may appear a very simple principle, and one which Burns had little merit in discovering. True, the discovery is easy enough: but the practical ap-

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[1]Horace's full rule is, "*Si vis me flere, dolendum est primum ipsi tibi*" (*De Arte Poetica*, Book II, 102, 103): "If you wish me to weep, you must first be grieved yourself." This Horace lays down as one of the chief requisites of a good poet.

pliance[1] is not easy; is indeed the fundamental difficulty which all poets have to strive with, and which scarcely one in the hundred ever fairly surmounts. A head too dull to discriminate the true from the false; a heart too dull to love the one at all risks, and to hate the other in spite of all temptations, are alike fatal to a writer. With either, or, as more commonly happens, with both, of these deficiencies, combine a love of distinction, a wish to be original, which is seldom wanting, and we have Affectation, the bane of literature, as Cant'[2] its elder brother, is of morals. How often does the one and the other front us, in poetry, as in life! Great poets themselves are not always free of this vice; nay, it is precisely on a certain sort and degree of greatness that it is most commonly ingrafted. A strong effort after excellence will sometimes solace itself with a mere shadow of success; he who has much to unfold, will sometimes unfold it imperfectly. Byron, for instance, was no common man: yet if we examine his poetry with this view, we shall find it far enough from faultless. Generally speaking, we should say that it is not true. He refreshes us, not with the divine fountain, but too often with vulgar strong waters, stimulating indeed to the taste, but soon ending in dislike, or even nausea. Are his

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[1]Modern usage would require *application* here, *appliance* being used to-day of a thing applied to effect a result rather than of the act of applying.

[2]"Cant: the hypocritical or perfunctory use of speech in order to obtain credit for piety or goodness." Carlyle, exalting as he did the virtue of sincerity, was very scornful of its opposite, and has much to say against Cant. The *Standard Dictionary*, to illustrate the definition just given, quotes from Carlyle (*French Revolution*, Vol. I, book II): "*Cant* is itself properly a double-distilled Lie; the second power of a Lie."

Harolds and Giaours,[1] we would ask, real men; we mean, poetically consistent and conceivable men? Do not these characters, does not the character of their author, which more or less shines through them all, rather appear a thing put on for the occasion; no natural or possible mode of being, but something intended to look much grander than nature? Surely, all these stormful agonies, this volcanic heroism, superhuman contempt, and moody desperation, with so much scowling, and teeth-gnashing, and other sulphurous humour,[2] is more like the brawling of a player in some paltry tragedy, which is to last three hours, than the bearing of a man in the business of life, which is to last three score and ten years. To our minds, there is a taint of this sort, something which we should call theatrical, false, affected, in every one of these otherwise so powerful pieces. Perhaps *Don Juan*,[3] especially the latter parts of it, is the only thing approaching to a *sincere* work, he ever wrote; the only work where he showed himself, in any measure, as he was; and seemed so intent on his subject as, for moments, to forget himself. Yet Byron hated this vice; we believe, heartily detested it: nay, he had declared formal war against it in words. So difficult is it even for the strongest to make this primary attainment,

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[1]Reference is to Byron's *Childe Harold* (1812-18) and his *Giaour* (1813). The former is an account of a journey through Europe, made by Byron himself, though he assumes the name of Harold for his pilgrim; the second is an oriental tale, Giaour being a term used by Mohammedans of a Christian.

[2]Probably as suggesting Hell, with which the smell of burning brimstone or sulphur is traditionally associated.

[3]Byron's last great work, left unfinished. Critics in general have agreed with Carlyle as to the excellence of this poem.

which might seem the simplest of all: to *read its own consciousness without mistakes,* without errors involuntary or wilful! We recollect no poet of Burns's susceptibility[1] who comes before us from the first, and abides with us to the last, with such a total want of affectation. He is an honest man, and an honest writer. In his success and his failures, in his greatness and his littleness, he is ever clear, simple, true, and glitters with no lustre but his own. We reckon this to be a great virtue; to be, in fact, the root of most other virtues, literary as well as moral.

13. Here, however, let us say, it is to the Poetry of Burns that we now allude; to those writings which he had time to meditate, and where no special reason existed to warp his critical feeling, or obstruct his endeavour to fulfil it. Certain of his Letters, and other fractions of prose composition, by no means deserve this praise. Here, doubtless, there is not the same natural truth of style; but on the contrary, something not only stiff, but strained and twisted; a certain, high-flown inflated tone; the stilting emphasis of which contrasts ill with the firmness and rugged simplicity of even his poorest verses.[2] Thus no man, it

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[1]There is an interesting bit of insight here into human nature. A person who is susceptible to all sorts of influences and responsive to every idea or experience is prone at times to cultivate emotions or opinions that are suggested to him and to pretend even to himself that they are more real than they are. His insincerity in this is largely "involuntary" or, at least, unconscious.

[2]To some extent Carlyle exaggerates the defects of Burns's prose style. The criticism applies, however, to all Burns's writings in standard English. His native tongue was the Scottish dialect, and his attempts to use purely literary English often have "a certain high-flown inflated tone." This is perhaps more noticeable in his poetry than in his prose. His best poems are all in dialect.

would appear, is altogether unaffected. Does not Shakespeare himself sometimes premeditate the sheerest bombast! But even with regard to these Letters of Burns, it is but fair to state that he had two excuses. The first was his comparative deficiency in language. Burns, though for most part he writes with singular force, and even gracefulness, is not master of English prose, as he is of Scottish verse; not master of it, we mean, in proportion to the depth and vehemence of his matter. These Letters strike us as the effort of a man to express something which he has no organ fit for expressing. But a second and weightier excuse is to be found in the peculiarity of Burns's social rank. His correspondents are often men whose relation to him he has never accurately ascertained; whom therefore he is either forearming himself against, or else unconsciously flattering, by adopting the style he thinks will please them. At all events, we should remember that these faults, even in his Letters, are not the rule, but the exception. Whenever he writes, as one would ever wish to do, to trusted friends and on real interests, his style becomes simple, vigorous, expressive, sometimes even beautiful. His letters to Mrs. Dunlop are uniformly excellent.

14. But we return to his Poetry. In addition to its Sincerity, it has another peculiar merit, which indeed is but a mode, or perhaps a means, of the foregoing: this displays itself in his choice of subjects; or rather in his indifference as to subjects, and the power he has of making all subjects interesting. The ordinary poet, like the ordinary man, is for ever seeking in external circumstances the help which can be found only in himself. In what is familiar and near at hand, he discerns no form or comeliness:[1] home is

[1]Isaiah LIII, 2.

not poetical but prosaic; it is in some past, distant, conventional heroic world, that poetry resides for him; were he there and not here, were he thus and not so, it would be well with him. Hence our innumerable host of rose-coloured Novels and iron-mailed Epics, with their locality not on the Earth, but somewhere nearer to the Moon. Hence our Virgins of the Sun, and our Knights of the Cross, malicious Saracens in turbans, and copper-coloured Chiefs in wampum,[1] and so many other truculent figures from the heroic times or the heroic climates, who on all hands swarm in our poetry. Peace be with them! But yet, as a great moralist proposed preaching to the men of this century, so would we fain preach to the poets, 'a sermon on the duty of staying at home.' Let them be sure that heroic ages and heroic climates can do little for them. That form of life has attraction for us, less because it is better or nobler than our own, than simply because it is different; and even this attraction must be of the most transient sort. For will not our own age, one day, be an ancient one; and have as quaint a costume as the rest; not contrasted with the rest, therefore, but ranked along with them, in respect of quaintness? Does Homer interest us now, because he wrote of what passed beyond his native Greece, and two centuries before he was born; or because he wrote what passed in God's world, and in the heart of man, which is the same after thirty centuries? Let our poets look to this: is their feeling really finer, truer, and their vision deeper than that of other men, they have nothing to fear, even from the humblest subject; is it not so,

[1] "Virgins of the Sun" are probably suggested by Thomas Moore's *Lalla Rookh;* "Knights of the Cross, malicious Saracens in turbans," by Scott's *Talisman;* "copper-coloured Chiefs in wampum," by the novels of James Fenimore Cooper.

—they have nothing to hope, but an ephemeral favour, even from the highest.

15. The poet, we imagine, can never have far to seek for a subject: the elements of his art are in him, and around him on every hand; for him the Ideal world is not remote from the Actual, but under it and within it: nay, he is a poet, precisely because he can discern it there. Wherever there is a sky above him, and a world around him, the poet is in his place; for here too is man's existence, with its infinite longings and small acquirings; its ever-thwarted, ever-renewed endeavours; its unspeakable aspirations, its tears and hopes that wander through Eternity; and all the mystery of brightness and of gloom that it was ever made of, in any age or climate, since man first began to live. Is there not the fifth act of a Tragedy[1] in every death-bed, though it were a peasant's, and a bed of heath? And are wooings and weddings obsolete, that there can be Comedy no longer? Or are men suddenly grown wise, that Laughter must no longer shake his sides, but be cheated of his Farce? Man's life and nature is, as it was, and as it will ever be. But the poet must have an eye to read these things, and a heart to understand them; or they come and pass away before him in vain. He is a *vates*,[2] a seer; a gift of vision

[1]The Elizabethan drama always has five acts; hence the fifth act of a tragedy contains the tragic conclusion.

[2]In *Heroes and Hero Worship*, "The Hero as Poet," Carlyle expands this idea: "Poet and Prophet differ greatly in our loose modern notions of them. In some old languages, again, the titles are synonymous; *Vates* [in Latin] means both Prophet and Poet: and indeed at all times, Prophet and Poet, well understood, have much kindred meaning. Fundamentally indeed they are still the same; in this most important respect especially, that they have penetrated both of them into the sacred mystery of the Universe."

has been given him. Has life no meanings for him, which another cannot equally decipher; then he is no poet, and Delphi itself will not make him one.

16. In this respect, Burns, though not perhaps absolutely a great poet, better manifests his capability, better proves the truth of his genius, than if he had, by his own strength, kept the whole Minerva Press going, to the end of his literary course. He shows himself at least a poet of Nature's own making; and Nature, after all, is still the grand agent in making poets. We often hear of this and the other external condition being requisite for the existence of a poet. Sometimes it is a certain sort of training; he must have studied certain things, studied for instance 'the elder dramatists.'[1] and so learned a poetic language; as if poetry lay in the tongue, not in the heart. At other times we are told he must be bred in a certain rank, and must be on confidential footing with the higher classes; because, above all things, he must see the world. As to seeing the world, we apprehend this will cause him little difficulty, if he have but eyesight to see it with. Without eyesight, indeed, the task might be hard. The blind or the purblind man 'travels from Dan to Beersheba, and finds it all barren.'[2] But happily every poet is born *in* the world; and sees it, with or against his will, every day and every hour

[1]The dramatists contemporary in a large sense with Shakespeare.

[2]Quoted from Laurence Sterne's *Sentimental Journey* (1768): "I pity the man who can travel from Dan to Beersheba and cry, 'Tis all barren'." The phrase "from Dan to Beersheba" is found in the Bible. The two places marked the northern and the souther extremities of Palestine, and are used to mean from one end of the country —or the world—to the other."

he lives. The mysterious workmanship of man's heart, the true light and the inscrutable darkness of man's destiny, reveal themselves not only in capital cities, and crowded saloons, but in every hut and hamlet where men have their abode. Nay, do not the elements of all human virtues and all human vices; the passions at once of a Borgia and of a Luther,[1] lie written, in stronger or fainter lines, in the consciousness of every individual bosom, that has practised honest self-examination? Truly, this same world may be seen in Mossgiel and Tarbolton, if we look well, as clearly as it ever came to light in Crockford's, or the Tuileries itself.

17. But sometimes still harder requisitions are laid on the poor aspirant to poetry; for it is hinted that he should have *been born* two centuries ago; inasmuch as poetry, about that date, vanished from the earth, and became no longer attainable by men![2] Such cobweb speculations have, now and then, overhung the field of literature; but they obstruct not the growth of any plant there: the Shakspeare or the Burns, unconsciously, and merely as he walks onward, silently

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[1]Caesar Borgia (1476-1507), an Italian prince of extraordinary wickedness; Martin Luther (1483-1546), the founder of Protestantism. Carlyle uses the two names to represent the worst and the best of human nature.

[2]The reference is to the theory laid down in Macaulay's *Essay on Milton*, published in the *Edinburgh Review* in 1825. In this essay Macaulay says, "We think that as civilization advances, poetry almost necessarily declines. . . . In proportion as men know more and think more, they look less at individuals and more at classes. They therefore make better theories and worse poems. . . . . In a rude state of society, men are children with a greater variety of ideas. It is therefore in such a society that we may expect to find the poetical temperament in its highest perfection."

brushes them away. Is not every genius an impossibility till he appear? Why do we call him new and original, if *we* saw where his marble was lying, and what fabric he could rear from it? It is not the material, but the workman that is wanting. It is not the dark *place* that hinders, but the dim *eye*. A Scottish peasant's life was the meanest and rudest of all lives, till Burns became a poet in it, and a poet of it; found it a *man's* life, and therefore significant to men. A thousand battle-fields remain unsung; but the *Wounded Hare*[1] has not perished without its memorial; a balm of mercy yet breathes on us from its dumb agonies, because a poet was there. Our *Hallowe'en*[2] had passed and repassed, in rude awe and laughter, since the era of the Druids; but no Theocritus, till Burns, discerned in it the materials of a Scottish Idyl: neither was the *Holy Fair* any *Council of Trent* or Roman *Jubilee;* but nevertheless, *Superstition* and *Hypocrisy* and *Fun* having been propitious to him, in this man's hand it became a poem, instinct with satire, and genuine comic life.[3] Let but the true poet be

[1]A poem by Burns on seeing a hare wounded and left to die by a sportsman. The poem is in literary English and not one of Burns's best, though its indignation and sympathy do credit to his heart.

[2]Burns wrote a poem with this title dealing with the superstitions and amusements of the Scotch peasants on Hallowe'en; as Carlyle implies, some of these practices go back to remote pagan times.

[3]The Council of Trent was a famous council of the Roman Catholic church, which met in the city of Trent in northeastern Italy in 1545-63. Roman Jubilee refers to the great concourse of Catholics every twenty-five or fifty years at Rome. The "Holy Fair," which Burns celebrated in a poem of that name, was a local religious meeting of very small importance in comparison with these gatherings. In the poem Superstition, Hypocrisy, and Fun are personi-

given us, we repeat it, place him where and how you will, and true poetry will not be wanting.

18. Independently of the essential gift of poetic feeling, as we have now attempted to describe it, a certain rugged sterling worth pervades whatever Burns has written: a virtue, as of green fields and mountain breezes, dwells in his poetry; it is redolent of natural life, and hardy natural men. There is a decisive strength in him, and yet a sweet native gracefulness: he is tender, he is vehement, yet without constraint or too visible effort; he melts the heart, or inflames it, with a power which seems habitual and familiar to him. We see that in this man there was the gentleness, the trembling pity of a woman, with the deep earnestness, the force and passionate ardour of a hero. Tears lie in him, and consuming fire; as lightning lurks in the drops of the summer cloud. He has a resonance in his bosom for every note of human feeling; the high and the low, the sad, the ludicrous, the joyful, are welcome in their turns to his 'lightly-moved and all-conceiving spirit.' And observe with what a fierce prompt force he grasps his subject, be it what it may! How he fixes, as it were, the full image of the matter in his eye; full and clear in every lineament; and catches the real type and essence of it, amid a thousand accidents and superficial circumstances, no one of which misleads him! Is it of reason; some truth to be discovered? No sophistry, no vain surface-logic detains him; quick, resolute, unerring, he pierces through into the marrow of the question: and speaks his verdict with an emphasis that cannot be forgotten. Is it of description; some visual object to be represented? No poet of any age

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fied as three women whom the poet meets on their way to the fair.

or nation is more graphic than Burns: the characteristic features disclose themselves to him at a glance; three lines from his hand, and we have a likeness. And, in that rough dialect, in that rude, often awkward metre,[1] so clear and definite a likeness! It seems a draughtsman working with a burnt stick; and yet the burin of a Retzsch is not more impressive or exact.

19. [2]Of this last excellence, the plainest and most comprehensive of all, being indeed the root and foundation of *every* sort of talent, poetical or intellectual, we could produce innumerable instances from the writings of Burns. Take these glimpses of a snow-storm from his *Winter Night* (the italics are ours):

> When biting Boreas, fell and doure,
> *Sharp shivers* thro' the leafless bow'r,
> And Phoebus *gies a short-liv'd glowr*
> *Far south the lift,*
> *Dim-dark'ning thro' the flaky show'r*
> *Or whirling drift:*
>
> 'Ae night the storm the steeples rock'd,
> Poor labour sweet in sleep was lock'd,
> While burns *wi' snawy wreeths upchok'd*
> *Wild-eddying swirl,*
> Or thro' the mining outlet bock'd
> Down headlong hurl.

Are there not 'descriptive touches' here? The describer *saw* this thing; the essential feature and true

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[1]This is misleading. Burns's rhymes are sometimes inexact, but his verses are metrically excellent.

[2]This paragraph was not in the original *Edinburgh Review* edition.

likeness of every circumstance in it; saw, and not with the eye only. 'Poor labour locked in sweet sleep;' the dead stillness of man, unconscious, vanquished, yet not unprotected, while such strife of the material elements rages, and seems to reign supreme in loneliness: this is of the heart as well as of the eye!—Look also at his image of a thaw, and prophesied fall of the *Auld Brig*:[1]

When heavy, dark, continued, a'-day rains
Wi' deepening deluges o'erflow the plains:
When from the hills where springs the brawling Coil,
Or stately Lugar's *mossy* fountains *boil*,
Or where the Greenock winds his *moorland* course,
Or haunted Garpal[2] draws his feeble source,

Arous'd by blust'ring winds and *spotting* thowes,
In mony a torrent down his snaw-broo rowes;
While crashing ice, borne on the roaring speat,
Sweeps dams and mills and brigs a' to the gate;
And from Glenbuck down to the Rottonkey,
Auld Ayre is just one lengthen'd *tumbling* sea;
Then down ye'll hurl, Deil nor ye never rise!
And *dash the gumlie jaups up to the pouring skies.*

The last line is in itself a Poussin-picture of that

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[1]The quotation is taken from Burns's poem, "The Twa Brigs [the two bridges] of Ayr." The *Auld Brig* [old bridge] of the poem is still standing; the *New Brig* has been destroyed. This latter event is prophesied in the passage quoted, which Carlyle applies mistakenly to the *Auld Brig*.

[2]Carlyle's note: *Fabulosus* Hydaspes! (This is quoted from Horace, *Odes*, Book I. xxxii, and means *Hydaspes full of legends*. Carlyle wishes to call attention to the parallel thought, which occurred independently to Burns, as he had never read Horace.)

Deluge! The welkin has, as it were, bent down with its weight; the 'gumlie jaups' and the 'pouring skies' are mingled together; it is a world of rain and ruin.—In respect of mere clearness and minute fidelity, the *Farmer's* commendation of his *Auld Mare,*[1] in plough, or in cart, may vie with Homer's Smithy of the Cyclops, or yoking of Priam's Chariot.[2] Nor have we forgotten stout *Burn-the-Wind* and his brawny customers, inspired by *Scotch Drink*:[3] but it is needless to multiply examples. One other trait of a much finer sort we select from multitudes of such among his *Songs.* It gives, in a single line, to the saddest feeling, the saddest environment and local habitation:

[4]*The pale Moon is setting beyond the white wave,*
And Time is setting wi' me, O;
Farewell false friends! false lover, farewell!
I'll nae mair trouble them nor thee, O.[4]

20. This clearness of sight we have called the foundation of all talent; for in fact, unless we *see* our object, how shall we know how to place or prize it, in

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[1]See Burns's poem, "The Auld Farmer's New-Year-Morning Salutation to his Auld Mare, Maggie."

[2]The Smithy of the Cyclops is described in the *Odyssey,* Book IX; the yoking of Priam's Chariot in the *Iliad,* Book XXIV.

[3]In Burns's poem, "Scotch Drink," the blacksmith is called Burnewin, probably, as Carlyle implies, a corruption of Burn-the-Wind.

[4]Carlyle is quoting from memory apparently and not very accurately. The lines are in "Open the Door to Me, Oh!" and read:

"The wan moon is setting behind the white wave
And time is setting wi' me, oh!
False friends, false love, farewell! for mair
I'll ne'er trouble them, nor thee, oh!"

our understanding, our imagination, our affections? Yet it is not in itself, perhaps, a very high excellence; but capable of being united indifferently with the strongest, or with ordinary powers. Homer surpasses all men in this quality: but strangely enough, at no great distance below him are Richardson and Defoe. It belongs, in truth, to what is called a lively mind; and gives no sure indication of the higher endowments that may exist along with it. In all the three cases we have mentioned, it is combined with great garrulity; their descriptions are detailed, ample, and lovingly exact; Homer's fire bursts through, from time to time, as if by accident; but Defoe and Richardson have no fire. Burns, again, is not more distinguished by the clearness than by the impetuous force of his conceptions. Of the strength, the piercing emphasis with which he thought, his emphasis of expression may give a humble but the readiest proof. Who ever uttered sharper sayings than his; words more memorable. now by their burning vehemence, now by their cool vigour and laconic pith? A single phrase depicts a whole subject, a whole scene. We hear of 'a gentleman that derived his patent of nobility direct from Almighty God."[1] Our Scottish forefathers in the battle-field struggled forward 'red-wat-shod:' in this one word, a full vision of horror and carnage, perhaps too frightfully accurate for Art!

21. In fact, one of the leading features in the

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[1]Carlyle is quoting from Burns in reference to Captain Matthew Henderson, but Burns wrote, "a gentleman who held the patent for his Honors immediately from Almighty God." Carlyle's wife, in a letter written before their marriage, used the expression of Carlyle himself, but he did not know this fact until her death, long after this essay was written.

mind of Burns is this vigour of his strictly intellectual perceptions. A resolute force is ever visible in his judgments, as in his feelings and volitions. Professor Stewart says of him, with some surprise: 'All the faculties of Burns's mind were, as far as I could judge, equally vigorous; and his predilection for poetry was rather the result of his own enthusiastic and impassioned temper, than of a genius exclusively adapted to that species of composition. From his conversation I should have pronounced him to be fitted to excel in whatever walk of ambition he had chosen to exert his abilities.' But this, if we mistake not, is at all times the very essence of a truly poetical endowment. Poetry, except in such cases as that of Keats, where the whole consists in a weak-eyed maudlin sensibility, and a certain vague random tunefulness of nature,[1] is no separate faculty, no organ which can be superadded to the rest, or disjoined from them; but rather the result of their general harmony and completion. The feelings, the gifts, that exist in the Poet, are those that exist, with more or less development, in every human soul: the imagination, which shudders at the Hell of Dante, is the same faculty, weaker in degree, which called that picture into being. How does the Poet speak to men, with power, but by being still more a man than they? Shakspeare, it has been well observed, in the planning and completing

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[1]In the *Edinburgh Review* edition the adjective "extreme" is used in place of "weak-eyed" and "maudlin," and the adjective "pervading" in place of "random." It is supposed that the editor, Jeffrey, softened the expressions out of respect for Keats, and that Carlyle restored his original wording when the essay was republished. Carlyle is intolerably unfair to Keats, who has a very high rank among English poets.

of his tragedies, has shown an Understanding, were it nothing more, which might have governed states, or indited a *Novum Organum*.[1] What Burns's force of understanding may have been, we have less means of judging: it had to dwell among the humblest objects; never saw Philosophy, never rose, except by natural effort and for short intervals, into the region of great ideas. Nevertheless, sufficient indication, if no proof sufficient, remains for us in his works: we discern the brawny movements of a gigantic though untutored strength, and can understand how, in conversation, his quick sure insight into men and things may, as much as aught else about him, have amazed the best thinkers of his time and country.

22. But, unless we mistake, the intellectual gift of Burns is fine as well as strong. The more delicate relations of things could not well have escaped his eye, for they were intimately present to his heart. The logic of the senate and the forum[2] is indispensable, but not all-sufficient; nay, perhaps the highest Truth is that which will the most certainly elude it. For this logic works by words, and 'the highest,' it has been said, 'cannot be expressed in words.' We are not without token of an openness for this higher truth also, of a keen though uncultivated sense for it, having existed in Burns. Mr. Stewart, it will be remembered, 'wonders,' in the passage above quoted,

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[1]The great philosophical treatise of the English philosopher, Francis Bacon (1561-1626). The statement is perhaps a little extravagant, but not so absurd as the belief of some misguided persons that Bacon wrote Shakspeare's plays.

[2]The forum in ancient Rome was originally the market-place, but as the law-courts were held there, the phrase "logic of the forum" probably means "logic of the law-court."

that Burns had formed some distinct conception of the 'doctrine of association.'[1] We rather think that far subtler things than the doctrine of association had from of old been familiar to him. Here for instance:

'We know nothing,' thus writes he, 'or next to nothing, of the structure of our souls, so we cannot account for those seeming caprices in them, that one should be particularly pleased with this thing, or struck with that, which, on minds of a different cast, makes no extraordinary impression. I have some favourite flowers in spring, among which the mountain-daisy, the harebell, the foxglove, the wild-brier rose, the budding birch, and the hoary hawthorn, that I view and hang over with particular delight. I never hear the loud solitary whistle of the curlew in a summer noon, or the wild mixing cadence of a troop of gray plover in an autumnal morning, without feeling an elevation of soul like the enthusiasm of devotion or poetry. Tell me, my dear friend, to what can this be owing? Are we a piece of machinery, which, like the Aeolian harp, passive, takes the impression of the passing accident; or do these workings argue something within us above the trodden clod? I own myself partial to such proofs of those awful and important realities: a God that made all things, man's immaterial and immortal nature, and a world of weal or wo beyond death and the grave.'

23. Force and fineness of understanding are often

[1]The so-called law of thought by which one idea will suggest another closely associated with it. This remark of Professor Stewart's is not in the quotation previously given by Carlyle, but is in the passage cited from Stewart by Lockhart. The long quotation from Burns in this paragraph is a part of a letter of his to Mrs. Dunlop printed in Lockhart's *Life* (pp. 196, 197).

spoken of as something different from general force and fineness of nature, as something partly independent of them. The necessities of language so require it; but in truth these qualities are not distinct and independent: except in special cases, and from special causes, they ever go together. A man of strong understanding is generally a man of strong character; neither is delicacy in the one kind often divided from delicacy in the other. No one, at all events, is ignorant that in the Poetry of Burns, keenness of insight keeps pace with keenness of feeling; that his *light* is not more pervading than his *warmth*. He is a man of the most impassioned temper; with passions not strong only, but noble, and of the sort in which great virtues and great poems take their rise. It is reverence, it is love towards all Nature that inspires him, that opens his eyes to its beauty, and makes heart and voice eloquent in its praise. There is a true old saying, that 'Love furthers knowledge:' but above all, it is the living essence of that knowledge which makes poets; the first principle of its existence, increase, activity. Of Burns's fervid affection, his generous all-embracing Love, we have spoken already, as of the grand distinction of his nature, seen equally in word and deed, in his Life and in his Writings. It were[1] easy to multiply examples. Not man only, but all that environs man in the material and moral universe, is lovely in his sight; 'the hoary hawthorn,' the 'troop of gray plover,' the 'solitary curlew,' all are dear to him; all live in this Earth along with him, and to all he is knit as in mysterious brotherhood. How touching is it, for instance, that, amidst the gloom of personal misery, brooding over the wintry desolation without him and within him,

[1] Old subjunctive. We should say, "It would be easy."

he thinks of the 'ourie cattle,' and 'silly sheep,' and their sufferings in the pitiless storm![1]

I thought me on the ourie cattle,
Or silly sheep, wha bide his brattle
O' wintry war;
Or thro' the drift, deep-lairing, sprattle,
Beneath a scaur.
Ilk happing bird, wee helpless thing,
That in the merry months o' spring
Delighted me to hear thee sing,
What comes o' thee?
Where wilt thou cow'r, thy chittering wing,
And close thy e'e?

The tenant of the mean hut, with its 'ragged roof and chinky wall,'[2] has a heart to pity even these! This is worth several homilies on Mercy: for it is the voice of Mercy herself. Burns, indeed, lives in sympathy; his soul rushes forth into all realms of being; nothing that has existence can be indifferent to him. The very Devil he cannot hate with right orthodoxy:

[3]But fare you well, auld Nickie-ben;
O, wad ye tak a thought and men'!
Ye aiblins might,—I dinna ken,—
Still hae a stake;
I'm wae to think upo' yon den,
Even for your sake!

24. "*He* is the father of curses and lies," said Dr. Slop; "and is cursed and damned already"—"I am

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[1]Quotation from Burn's poem, "A Winter Night."
[2]Another quotation from the same poem.
[3]From Burn's "Address to the Deil."

sorry for it," quoth my uncle Toby![1]—A Poet without Love,[2] were a physical and metaphysical impossibility.

25. [3]But has it not been said in contradiction to this principle, that, 'Indignation makes verses'?[4] It has been so said, and is true enough: but the contradiction is apparent, not real. The Indignation which makes verses is, properly speaking, an inverted Love; the love of some right, some worth, some goodness, belonging to ourselves or others, which has been injured, and which this tempestuous feeling issues forth to defend and avenge. No selfish fury of heart, existing there as a primary feeling, and without its opposite, ever produced much Poetry: otherwise, we suppose, the Tiger were the most musical of all our choristers. Johnson said, he loved a good hater;[1] by which he must have meant, not so much one that hated violently, as one that hated wisely; hated baseness from love of nobleness. However, in spite of Johnson's paradox, tolerable enough for once in speech, but which need not have been so often adopted in print since then, we rather believe that good men deal sparingly in hatred, either wise or

[1]From Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* (1759-61). Uncle Toby is a very lovable person, a famous character in fiction. His sympathy is, like Burns's, so great that it extends even to the Devil.

[2]Subjunctive: compare with "It were easy" in paragraph 23, also with "the Tiger were" in paragraph 25.

[3]Paragraphs 25 and 26 are not in the *Edinburgh Review* edition.

[4]Juvenal, *Satires*, I, 79: "*Si natura negat, facit indignatio versum.*" "If nature refuses, indignation makes the verse."

This statement is often attributed to Samuel Johnson, but what he said was, "Dear Bathurst was a man to my very heart's content: he hated a fool, and he hated a rogue, and he hated a Whig; he was a very good hater." (From Mrs. Piozzi's *Anecdotes of Dr. Samuel Johnson.*)

unwise: nay that a 'good' hater is still a desideratum[1] in this world. The Devil, at least, who passes for the chief and best of that class, is said to be nowise an amiable character.

26. Of the verses which Indignation makes, Burns has also given us specimens: and among the best that were ever given. Who will forget his '*Dweller in yon Dungeon dark*';[2] a piece that might have been chaunted by the Furies of Aeschylus?[3] The secrets of the infernal Pit are laid bare; a boundless baleful 'darkness visible';[4] and streaks of hell-fire quivering madly in its black haggard bosom.

> Dweller in yon Dungeon dark,
> Hangman of Creation, mark!
> Who in widow's weeds appears,
> Laden with unhonoured years,
> Noosing with care a bursting purse,
> Baited with many a deadly curse?

27. Why should we speak of *Scots, wha hae wi Wallace bled;*[5] since all know of it, from the king to

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[1]What Carlyle means is that goodness in a hater or in hatred is very rare—probably non-existent.

[2]The first line of Burns's "Ode, Sacred to the Memory of Mrs. Oswald."

[3]Aeschylus (425-456 B. C.), one of the great tragic dramatists of ancient Greece. The Furies were Greek goddesses who carried out the vengeance of the gods against sinning mortals; they form the Chorus in Aeschylus's tragedy of *The Eumenides.*

[4]Milton, *Paradise Lost*, I. 63.

[5]The first line of Burns's poem, "Bruce's Address at Bannockburn." The victory of the Scots under Robert Bruce over the English at Bannockburn in 1314 secured the independence of Scotland. William Wallace was the first leader of the Scots in their struggle against the English authority. In this poem Burns imagines Bruce addressing his soldiers before the battle.

the meanest of his subjects? This dithyrambic was composed on horseback; in riding in the middle of tempests, over the wildest Galloway moor, in company with a Mr. Syme, who, observing the poet's looks, forbore to speak,—judiciously enough, for a man composing *Bruce's Address* might be unsafe to trifle with. Doubtless this stern hymn was singing itself, as he formed it, through the soul of Burns: but to the external ear, it should be sung with the throat of the whirlwind. So long as there is warm blood in the heart of Scotchman or man, it will move in fierce thrills under this war-ode; the best, we believe, that was ever written by any pen.

28. Another wild stormful song, that dwells in our ear and mind with a strange tenacity, is *Macpherson's Farewell.*[1] Perhaps there is something in the tradition itself that that co-operates. For was not this grim Celt, this shaggy Northland Cacus,[2] that 'lived a life of sturt and strife, and died by treacherie,'[3]—was not he too one of the Nimrods[4] and Napoleons of the earth, in the arena of his own remote misty glens, for want of a clearer and wider one? Nay, was there not a touch of grace given

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[1]James Macpherson, a Highland outlaw, was hanged in Edinburgh in 1700. The tradition was that he composed an air and played it on the bag-pipes on his way to execution. Burns wrote a song to this air, called "*Macpherson's Farewell.*"

[2]The Highland Scots, like the Irish, the Welsh, and the inhabitants of Brittany in France, belong to the Celtic race. Cacus was a giant killed by Hercules; the resemblance between him and Macpherson lies in the fact that they both stole cattle.

[3]Quoted indirectly from the poem.

[4]Nimrod was the reputed founder of Babylon. In Genesis X:8-10, he is called "a mighty one in the earth" and "a mighty hunter before the Lord."

him? A fibre of love and softness, of poetry itself, must have lived in his savage heart: for he composed that air the night before his execution; on the wings of that poor melody, his better soul would soar away above oblivion, pain, and all the ignominy and despair, which, like an avalanche, was hurling him into the abyss! Here also, as at Thebes, and in Pelops' line, was material Fate matched against man's Free-will;[1] matched in bitterest though obscure duel; and the ethereal soul sank not, even in its blindness, without a cry which has survived it. But who, except Burns, could have given words to such a soul: words that we never listen to without a strange half-barbarous, half-poetic fellow-feeling?

[2]*Sae rantingly, sae wantonly,*
Sae dauntingly gaed he;
He play'd a spring, and danced it round,
Below the gallows-tree.

29. Under a lighter disguise, the same principle of Love, which we have recognised as the great characteristic of Burns, and of all true poets, occasionally manifests itself in the shape of Humour. Everywhere, indeed, in his sunny moods, a full buoy-

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[1]Milton in *Il Penseroso*, 11. 99, 100, refers to Greek tragedy as

"Presenting Thebes, or Pelops' line,
Or the tale of Troy divine."

The main subjects of Greek tragedy dealt with the history of the city of Thebes, with the misfortunes of the descendants of Pelops, and with the incidents growing out of the Trojan war. The central theme of these dramas was the struggle of human beings against Fate. The exact meaning of the adjective "material" as applied to Fate here is a little obscure. Carlyle probably means that Fate governs matter only and has no control over the soul.

[2]Chorus of the poem.

ant flood of mirth rolls through the mind of Burns; he rises to the high, and stoops to the low, and is brother and playmate to all Nature. We speak not of his bold and often irresistible faculty of caricature; for this is Drollery rather than Humour: but a much tenderer sportfulness dwells in him; and comes forth here and there, in evanescent and beautiful touches; as in his *Address to the Mouse,* or the *Farmer's Mare,* or in his *Elegy on poor Mailie,* which last may be reckoned his happiest of this kind. In these pieces, there are traits of a Humour as fine as that of Sterne; yet altogether different, original, peculiar,—the Humour of Burns.

30. Of the tenderness, the playful pathos, and many other kindred qualities of Burns's Poetry, much more might be said; but now, with these poor outlines of a sketch, we must prepare to quit this part of our subject. To speak of his individual Writings, adequately, and with any detail, would lead us far beyond our limits. As already hinted, we can look on but few of these pieces as, in strict critical language, deserving the name of Poems: they are rhymed eloquence, rhymed pathos, rhymed sense; yet seldom essentially melodious, aerial, poetical. *Tam o' Shanter*[1] itself, which enjoys so high a favour, does not appear to us, at all decisively, to come under this

[1]Generally regarded—and rightly—as one of Burns's most successful poems. Carlyle's criticism is not very sound. He seems to demand a serious handling of subject-matter in a poem designedly humorous. His inability to appreciate this work is due to his romanticism; Burns, while he had romantic tendencies, is, in *Tam o' Shanter*, fundamentally a realist and a satirist. He probably intended to create just the incongruous impression, the "drunken phantasmagoria" that Carlyle complains of.

last catagory.[1] It is not so much a poem, as a piece of sparkling rhetoric; the heart and body of the story still lies hard and dead. He has not gone back, much less carried us back, into that dark, earnest, wondering age, when the tradition was believed, and when it took its rise; he does not attempt, by any new-modelling of his supernatural ware, to strike anew that deep mysterious chord of human nature, which once responded to such things; and which lives in us too, and will for ever live, though silent now, or vibrating with far other notes, and to far different issues. Our German readers will understand us, when we say, that he is not the Tieck but the Masäus of this tale. Externally it is all green and living; yet look closer, it is no firm growth, but only ivy on a rock. The piece does not properly cohere: the strange chasm which yawns in our incredulous imaginations between the Ayr public-house and the gate of Tophet, is nowhere bridged over, nay the idea of such a bridge is laughed at; and thus the Tragedy of the adventure becomes a mere drunken phantasmagoria, or many-coloured spectrum painted on ale-vapours, and the Farce alone has any reality. We do not say that Burns should have made much more of this tradition; we rather think that, for strictly poetical purposes, not much *was* to be made of it. Neither are we blind to the deep, varied, genial power displayed in what he has actually accomplished; but we find far more 'Shakspearean' qualities, as these of *Tam o' Shanter* have been fondly named,[2] in many of his other pieces; nay, we incline to believe, that this latter might have been written, all but quite as well,

[1]The category—fundamental classification—of "essentially poetical."

[2]See quotation from Lockhart in the "Introduction."

by a man who, in place of genius, had only possessed talent.

31. Perhaps we may venture to say, that the most strictly poetical of all his 'poems' is one, which does not appear in Currie's Edition; but has been often printed before and since, under the humble title of *The Jolly Beggars.*[1] The subject truly is among the lowest in Nature; but it only the more shows our Poet's gift in raising it into the domain of Art. To our minds, this piece seems thoroughly compacted; melted together, refined; and poured forth in one flood of true *liquid* harmony. It is light, airy, soft of movement; yet sharp and precise in its details; every face is a portrait: that *raucle carlin*, that *wee Apollo*, that *Son of Mars*, are Scottish, yet ideal; the scene is at once a dream, and the very Ragcastle of 'Poosie-Nansie.' Farther, it seems in a considerable degree complete, a real self-supporting Whole, which is the highest merit in a poem. The blanket of the Night is drawn asunder for a moment; in full, ruddy, flaming light, these rough tatterdemalions are seen in their boisterous revel; for the strong pulse of life vindicates its right to gladness even here; and when the curtain closes, we prolong the action, without effort; the next day as the last, our *Caird* and our *Balladmonger* are singing and soldering; their 'brats

[1]This poem is an account of a revel in a Scottish tavern, during which various characters present sing songs typical of their ways of life and their personalities. Some of these characters are named here: the *wee Apollo* is the fiddler, who gets his nickname from the Greek god of music; the *Son of Mars* is the soldier, Mars being the Roman god of war; Poosie-Nansie is the tavern-keeper; the *Caird* is a tinker or traveling mender of pots and pans; the *Balladmonger* is a person who goes about singing and selling ballads. There is no doubt that the poem is, as Carlyle says, a masterpiece.

and callets' are hawking, begging, cheating; and some other night, in new combinations, they will wring from Fate another hour of wassail and good cheer. Apart from the universal sympathy with man which this again bespeaks in Burns, a genuine inspiration and no inconsiderable technical talent are manifested here. There is the fidelity, humour, warm life, and accurate painting and grouping of some Teniers, for whom hostlers and carousing peasants are not without significance. It would be strange, doubtless, to call this the best of Burns's writings: we mean to say only, that it seems to us the most perfect of its kind, as a piece of poetical composition, strictly so called. In the *Beggar's Opera*, in the *Beggar's Bush*,[1] as other critics have already remarked, there is nothing which, in real poetic vigour equals this *Cantata;* nothing, as we think, which comes within many degrees of it.

32. But by far the most finished, complete, and truly inspired pieces of Burns are, without dispute, to be found among his *Songs*. It is here that, although through a small aperture,[2] his light shines with least obstruction; in its highest beauty and pure sunny clearness. The reason may be, that Song is a brief simple species of composition; and requires nothing so much for its perfection, as gen-

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[1]*The Beggar's Opera* by John Gay (1727) is a singing play in which the principal characters are thieves, highwaymen, and jailers. It was very popular for many years and has been put on the stage again in recent times. *The Beggar's Bush* by John Fletcher (1622) is another play of low life, but considerably less important than the first-named. The "remark" from "other critics" is undoubtedly a reference to Lockhart's *Life*. (See Introduction.)

[2]Probably a reference to the brevity of each separate song rather than to the importance of the songs taken together.

uine poetic feeling, genuine music of heart. Yet the Song has its rules equally with the Tragedy; rules which in most cases are poorly fulfilled, in many cases are not so much as felt. We might write a long essay on the Songs of Burns; which we reckon by far the best that Britain has yet produced: for, indeed, since the era of Queen Elizabeth, we know not that, by any other hand, aught truly worth attention has been accomplished in this department.[1] True, we have songs enough 'by persons of quality;'[2] we have tawdry, hollow, wine-bred madrigals; many a rhymed speech 'in the flowing and watery vein of Ossorius the Portugal Bishop,'[3] rich in sonorous words, and, for moral, dashed perhaps with some tint of a sentimental sensuality; all which many persons cease not from endeavouring to sing; though for most part, we fear, the music is but from the throat outwards, or at best from some region far enough short of the *Soul;* not in which, but in a certain inane Limbo of the Fancy, or even in some vaporous debatable land on the outskirts of the Nervous System,[4] most of such madrigals and rhymed speeches seem to have originated.

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[1]The Elizabethan Age is famous for its beautiful songs. See those in Shakespeare's plays for example; in song-writing Shakespeare did not excel the rest of his contemporaries so greatly as in the drama.

[2]In the days when professional authorship was thought somewhat degrading to a lady or a gentleman of high social position, poems and other pieces of literature were sometimes printed anonymously as "by a person of quality."

[3]Quoted from Bacon's *Advancement of Learning;* Bacon is criticizing empty and artificial elegance of style, and cites Ossorius (16th century), who wrote in Latin, as an example.

[4]Limbo was, in the Middle Ages, supposed to be an otherworld place located somewhere between Heaven and Hell;

33. With the Songs of Burns we must not name these things. Independently of the clear, manly, heartfelt sentiment that ever pervades *his* poetry, his Songs are honest in another point of view; in form, as well as in spirit. They do not *affect* to be set to music, but they actually and in themselves are music; they have received their life, and fashioned themselves together, in the medium of Harmony, as Venus rose from the bosom of the sea.[5] The story, the feeling, is not detailed, but suggested; not *said,* or spouted, in rhetorical completeness and coherence; but *sung,* in fitful gushes, in glowing hints, in fantastic breaks, in *warblings* not of the voice only, but of the whole mind. We consider this to be the essence of a song; and that no songs since the little careless catches, and, as it were, drops of song, which Shakspeare has here and there sprinkled over his plays, fulfil this condition in nearly the same degree as most of Burns's do. Such grace and truth of external movement, too, presupposes in general a corresponding force and truth of sentiment and inward meaning. The songs of Burns are not more perfect in the former quality than in the latter. With what tenderness he sings, yet with what vehemence and entireness! There is a piercing wail in his sorrow, the purest rapture in his joy; he burns with the sternest ire, or laughs with the loudest or slyest mirth; and yet he is sweet and soft, 'sweet as the

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the "debatable land" was the country between England and Scotland, the ownership of which was in dispute before the union of the two kingdoms. In other words, these songs are so worthless that they seem to come from some faculty of the author which is hardly a part of the mind at all.

[5]This was the origin, according to Greek myth, of the goddess of love and beauty, called by the Greeks Aphrodite and by the Romans Venus.

smile when fond lovers meet, and soft as their parting tear. If we farther take into account the immense variety of his subjects; how, from the loud flowing revel in *Willie brew'd a Peck o' Maut,* to the still, rapt enthusiasm of sadness for *Mary in Heaven;* from the glad kind greeting of *Auld Lang-syne,* or the comic archness of *Duncan Gray,* to the fire-eyed fury of *Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled,*[1] he has found a tone and words for every mood of man's heart,—it will seem small praise if we rank him as the first of all our Song-writers; for we know not where to find one worthy of being second to him.

34. It is on his Songs, as we believe, that Burns's chief influence as an author will ultimately be found to depend: nor, if our Fletcher's[2] aphorism is true, shall we account this a small influence. 'Let me make the songs of a people,' said he, 'and you shall make its laws.' Surely, if ever any Poet might have equalled himself with Legislators, on this ground, it was Burns. His Songs are already part of the mother-tongue, not of Scotland only but of Britain, and of the millions that in all ends of the earth speak a British language. In hut and hall, as the heart unfolds itself in many-coloured joy and woe of existence, the *name,* the *voice* of that joy and that woe, is the name and voice which Burns has given them. Strictly speaking, perhaps no British man has so deeply affected the thoughts and feelings of so many men, as this solitary and altogether private individual, with means apparently the humblest.

35. In another point of view, moreover, we in-

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[1]The references in this sentence are all to various songs of Burns.

[2]Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun (1653-1716). Carlyle perhaps calls him "our Fletcher" because he was Scotch; there were several famous English Fletchers.

cline to think that Burns's influence may have been considerable: we mean, as exerted specially on the Literature of his country, at least on the Literature of Scotland. Among the great changes which British, particularly Scottish literature, has undergone since that period, one of the greatest will be found to consist in its remarkable increase of nationality. Even the English writers, most popular in Burns's time, were little distinguished for their literary patriotism, in this its best sense. A certain attenuated cosmopolitanism had, in good measure, taken place of the old insular home-feeling;[1] literature was, as it were, without any local environment; was not nourished by the affections which spring from a native soil. Our Grays and our Glovers[2] seemed to write almost as if *in vacuo;* the thing written bears no mark of place; it is not written so much for Englishmen, as for men; or rather, which is the inevitable result of this, for certain Generalisations which philosophy termed men. Goldsmith is an exception:

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[1]*Cosmopolitanism* is defined as a freedom from local attachments and prejudices; the genuine cosmopolitan has no preferences for his own country over any others. Carlyle thinks that this attitude implies a very "thin" and cold nature. *Insular*, which means literally pertaining to an island, is generally used in a bad sense of the narrow prejudices supposed to be characteristic of islanders, especially of the British. Carlyle uses it here in a favorable sense, as suggesting patriotic and home-loving.

[2]Richard Glover (1712-1785), author of *Leonidas* and other poems, a very insignificant writer, ought not to be coupled with Thomas Gray (1716-1771), author of *An Elegy in a Country Churchyard*, etc., a much greater poet. Carlyle is unfair to Gray; his poems, though saturated with classical learning, display genuine interest in British themes and backgrounds.

not so Johnson;[1] the scene of his *Rambler* is little more English than that of his *Rasselas*.

36. But if such was, in some degree, the case with England, it was, in the highest degree, the case with Scotland. In fact, our Scottish literature had, at that period, a very singular aspect; unexampled, so far as we know, except perhaps at Geneva,[2] where the same state of matters appears still to continue. For a long period after Scotland became British, we had no literature: at the date when Addison and Steele were writing their *Spectators*, our good John Boston was writing, with the noblest intent, but alike in defiance of grammar and philosophy, his *Fourfold State of Man*.[3] Then came the schisms in

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[1]Carlyle evidently refers to Goldsmith's *Deserted Village*, a poem describing English country life. He is again unfair to Johnson. No one could have been more characteristically English in his feelings and ideas than Samuel Johnson. *The Rambler* is a collection of essays; *Rasselas* is a story, the scene of which is laid in Africa.

[2]Geneva in the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries offered a safe home for political and religious refugees from other lands. Its culture was largely due to these exiles.

[3]"Scotland became British," in 1603, when James VI of Scotland ascended the English throne as James I. Before this time the Scots had had a national literature of their own. The supremacy of England reduced the Scottish speech to the level of an unliterary dialect. The few Scotchmen who tried to write literature in the 17th century wrote in English, which was really an acquired tongue. The bad English spoken by Scotchmen was proverbial in England until the latter part of the 18th century. The *Spectator* essays (1711-12) written by Addison and Steele and including the famous *Sir Roger de Coverley Papers*, represent the perfection of English prose style. Carlyle cites them to contrast with their good English the bad English of contemporary Scottish writers,

our National Church, and the fiercer schisms in our Body Politic:[1] Theologic ink, and Jacobite blood, with gall enough in both cases, seemed to have blotted out the intellect of the country; however, it was only obscured, not obliterated. Lord Kames made nearly the first attempt at writing English; and ere long, Hume, Robertson, Smith,[2] and a whole host of followers, attracted hither the eyes of all Europe. And yet in this brilliant resuscitation of our 'fervid genius,'[3] there was nothing truly Scottish, nothing indigenous; except, perhaps, the natural impetuosity of intellect, which we sometimes claim, and are sometimes upbraided with, as a characteristic of our nation. It is curious to remark that Scotland, so full of writers, had no Scottish culture, nor indeed any English; our

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as represented by the insignificant "John" Boston, whose real name was not John, but Thomas.

[1]The schisms in the Church were due to the struggle between Presbyterianism and Episcopacy; the schisms in the "Body Politic" to the rebellions of the Jacobites, a name given in both England and Scotland to those who wished to restore to the throne the Stuart line of kings, dethroned in 1688 on account of the tyranny of James II. The name comes from the Latin form of James, *Jacobus*. As the Stuarts were Scotch in origin, the Jacobites were especially strong in Scotland, and their rebellions, particularly the great rebellion of 1745, occasioned much bloodshed and bitter feeling.

[2]For these and other proper names in this paragraph, see Glossary.

[3]The famous phrase, "*procefervidum ingenium Scotorum*," the "very fervid genius (or *native ability*) of the *Scots*," occurs in the *History of Scotland* by George Buchanan (1505-82). Buchanan wrote in Latin, which was the usual language of learning in those days.

culture was almost exclusively French.[1] It was by studying Racine and Voltaire, Batteux and Boileau, that Kames had trained himself to be a critic and philosopher; it was the light of Montesquieu and Mably that guided Robertson in his political speculations; Quesnay's lamp that kindled the lamp of Adam Smith. Hume was too rich a man to borrow; and perhaps he reacted on the French more than he was acted on by them: but neither had he aught to do with Scotland; Edinburgh, equally with La Fleche, was but the lodging and laboratory, in which he not so much morally *lived,* as metaphysically *investigated.* Never, perhaps, was there a class of writers so clear and well-ordered, yet so totally destitute, to all appearance, of any patriotic affection, nay of any human affection whatever.[2] The French wits of the period were as unpatriotic: but their general deficiency in moral principle, not to say their avowed sensuality and unbelief in all virtue, strictly so called, render this accountable enough. We hope there is a patriotism founded on something better than prejudice; that our country may be dear to us, without injury to our philosophy; that in loving and prizing

[1]During the long struggle of Scotland with England, the natural ally of the former was France. Hence, the ties of association between France and Scotland were close, and the French influence in the poorer and more backward country was very great. This influence lasted, to a certain extent, through the 18th century, but Carlyle probably exaggerates it—especially the influence of Quesnay on Adam Smith.

[2]Hume was, as Carlyle says, a man who displayed an extraordinary lack of any human emotion. The statement seems to be less true of Smith and Robertson, the nature of whose subject-matter forebade any emotionalism in their writings.

all other lands, we may prize justly, and yet love before all others, our own stern Motherland, and the venerable Structure of social and moral Life, which Mind has through long ages been building up for us there. Surely there is nourishment for the better part of man's heart in all this: surely the roots, that have fixed themselves in the very core of man's being, may be so cultivated as to grow up not into briers, but into roses, in the field of his life! Our Scottish sages have no such propensities: the field of their life shows neither briers nor roses; but only a flat, continuous thrashing-floor for Logic, whereon all questions, from the 'Doctrine of Rent,' to the 'Natural History of Religion,[1] are thrashed and sifted with the same mechanical impartiality!

37. With Sir Walter Scott at the head of our literature,[2] it cannot be denied that much of this evil is past, or rapidly passing away: our chief literary men, whatever other faults they may have, no longer live among us like a French Colony, or some knot of Propaganda Missionaries; but like natural-born subjects of the soil, partaking and sympathising in all our attachments, humours and habits. Our literature no longer grows in water, but in mould, and with the

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[1]Title of a work by Hume; Adam Smith discussed the "Doctrine of Rent."

[2]Carlyle here pays a tribute to the use by Sir Walter Scott of native Scotch subject-matter, thougn he did not much admire Scott's works. His essay on *Sir Walter Scott*, published in the *Edinburgh Review* in 1838, contains more unfavorable than favorable criticism of Scott as a writer, but several hearty tributes to him as a man, notably this, at the close: "When he departed, he took a Man's life along with him. No sounder piece of British manhood was put together in that eighteenth century of Time."

true racy virtues of the soil and climate. How much of this change may be due to Burns, or to any other individual, it might be difficult to estimate. Direct literary imitation of Burns was not to be looked for. But his example, in the fearless adoption of domestic subjects, could not but operate from afar; and certainly in no heart did the love of country ever burn with a warmer glow than in that of Burns: 'a tide of Scottish prejudice,' as he modestly calls this deep and generous feeling, 'had been poured along his veins; and he felt that it would boil there till the floodgates shut in eternal rest.' It seemed to him, as if *he* could do so little for his country, and yet would so gladly have done all. One small province stood open for him; that of Scottish Song, and how eagerly he entered on it; how devotedly he laboured there! In his toilsome journeyings, this object never quits him; it is the little happy valley[1] of his careworn heart. In the gloom of his own affliction, he eagerly searches after some lonely brother of the muse, and rejoices to snatch one other name from the oblivion that was covering it! These were early feelings, and they abode with him to the end:

> . . . A wish (I mind its power),
> A wish, that to my latest hour
> Will strongly heave my breast;
> That I, for poor auld Scotland's sake,
> Some useful plan or book could make,
> Or sing a sang at least.
>
> The rough bur Thistle, spreading wide
> Amang the bearded bear,

[1]In Johnson's tale of *Rasselas*, the "Happy Valley" is the place where the princes of Abyssinia are kept in seclusion from all the cares and troubles of the world.

I turn'd my weeding-clips aside,
And spared the symbol dear.[1]

38. But to leave the mere literary character of Burns, which has already detained us too long. Far more interesting than any of his written works, as it appears to us, are his acted ones:[2] the Life he willed, and was fated, to lead among his fellow men. These Poems are but like little rhymed fragments scattered here and there in the grand unrhymed Romance of his earthly existence; and it is only when intercalated in this at their proper places, that they attain their full measure of significance. And this too, alas, was but a fragment! The plan of a mighty edifice had been sketched; some columns, porticos, firm masses of building, stand completed; the rest more or less clearly indicated; with many a far-stretching tendency, which only studious and friendly eyes can now trace toward the purposed termination. For the work is broken off in the middle, almost in the beginning; and rises among us, beautiful and sad, at once unfinished and a ruin! If charitable judgment was necessary in estimating his Poems, and justice required that the aim and the manifest power to fulfil it, must often be accepted for the fulfilment; much more is this the case in regard to his life, the sum and result of all his endeavours, where His difficulties

[1] From "Epistle to the Guidwife of Wauchope House." Burns spared the thistle because it is the national emblem of Scotland; the motto that goes along with it is, "*Nemo me impune lacessit*": No one provokes (or challenges) me without punishment.

[2] Carlyle was always much interested in Biography, which he regularly spells with a capital. It is, however, somewhat absurd to say that Burns's life is more interesting than his "written works," for without the latter we should never have been interested in him at all.

came upon him not in detail only, but in mass; and so much has been left unaccomplished, nay was mistaken, and altogether marred.

39. Properly speaking, there is but one era in the life of Burns, and that the earliest. We have not youth and manhood, but only youth: for, to the end, we discern no decisive change in the complexion of his character; in his thirty-seventh year, he is still, as it were, in youth. With all that resoluteness of judgment, that penetrating insight, and singular maturity of intellectual power, exhibited in his writings, he never attains to any clearness regarding himself; to the last, he never ascertains his peculiar aim, even with such distinctness as is common among ordinary men; and therefore never can pursue it with that singleness of will, which insures success and some contentment to such men. To the last, he wavers between two purposes: glorying in his talent, like a true poet, he yet cannot consent to make this his chief and sole glory, and to follow it as the one thing needful, through poverty or riches, through good or evil report. Another far meaner ambition still cleaves to him; he must dream and struggle about a certain 'Rock of Independence;' which, natural and even admirable as it might be, was still but a warring with the world, on the comparatively insignificant ground of his being more completely or less completely supplied with money than others; of his standing at a higher, or at a lower altitude in general estimation, than others. For the world still appears to him, as to the young, in borrowed colours: he expects from it what it cannot give to any man; seeks for contentment, not within himself, in action and wise effort, but from without, in the kindness of circumstances, in love, friendship, honour, pecuniary ease. He would be happy, not actively and in himself, but passively,

and from some ideal cornucopia of Enjoyments, not earned by his own labour, but showered on him by the beneficence of Destiny. Thus, like a young man, he cannot gird himself up for any worthy well-calculated goal, but swerves to and fro, between passionate hope and remorseful disappointments: rushing onwards with a deep tempestuous force, he surmounts or breaks asunder many a barrier; travels, nay advances far, but advancing only under uncertain guidance, is ever and anon turned from his path; and to the last, cannot reach the only true happiness of a man, that of clear decided Activity in the sphere for which, by nature and circumstances, he has been fitted and appointed.

40. We do not say these things in dispraise of Burns; nay, perhaps, they but interest us the more in his favour. This blessing[1] is not given soonest to the best; but rather, it is often the greatest minds that are latest in obtaining it; for where most is to be developed, most time may be required to develope it. A complex condition had been assigned him from without; as complex a condition from within: no 'pre-established harmony'[2] existed between the clay soil of Mossgiel and the empyrean soul of Robert Burns; it was not wonderful that the adjustment between them should have been long postponed, and his arm long cumbered, and his sight confused, in so vast

[1]Refers to "the only true happiness of a man," defined in the last sentence of the preceding paragraph.

[2]Refers to the theory of the relation between God and the soul expressed by Nicolas Malebranche (1638-1715). Carlyle means to imply that the heavenly soul of Burns found itself out of harmony with earth. As a matter of fact, Burns's best poems are realistic, based firmly on the "clay soil of Mossgiel."

and discordant an economy,[1] as he had been appointed steward over. Byron was, at his death, but a year younger than Burns; and through life, as it might have appeared, far more simply situated: yet in him too we can trace no such adjustment, no such moral manhood, but at best, and only a little before his end, the beginning of what seemed such.

41. By much the most striking incident in Burns's Life is his journey to Edinburgh; but perhaps a still more important one, is his residence at Irvine,[2] so early as in his twenty-third year. Hitherto his life had been poor and toilworn; but otherwise not ungenial, and, with all its distresses, by no means unhappy. In his parentage, deducting outward circumstances, he had every reason to reckon himself fortunate:[3] his father was a man of thoughtful, intense, earnest character, as the best of our peasants are; valuing knowledge, possessing some, and, what is far better and rarer, open-minded for more: a man with a keen insight and devout heart; reverent towards God, friendly therefore at once, and fearless towards all that God has made; in one word, though but a hard-handed peasant, a complete and fully unfolded *Man*. Such a father is seldom found in any rank in society; and was worth descending far in society to seek. Unfortunately, he was very poor; had he been

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[1]Economy may mean "any practical system in which means are adjusted to ends." Carlyle uses it here somewhat curiously to refer to a system not practical, in which means and ends are not so adjusted.

[2]In the rest of this paragraph Carlyle discusses the favorable conditions under which Burns lived before his "residence at Irvine." He returns to the latter subject in the next paragraph.

[3]See the biographical sketch of Carlyle in the "Introduction" for parallels between his family and that of Burns.

even a little richer, almost never so little, the whole might have issued far otherwise. Mighty events turn on a straw; the crossing of a brook decides the conquest of the world. Had this William Burns's small seven acres of nursery-ground anywise prospered, the boy Robert had been sent to school; had struggled forward, as so many weaker men do, to some university; come forth not as a rustic wonder, but as a regular well-trained intellectual workman, and changed the whole course of British Literature,—for it lay in him to have done this![2] But the nursery did not prosper; poverty sank his whole family below the help of even our cheap school-system: Burns remained a hard-worked ploughboy, and British literature took its own course. Nevertheless, even in this rugged scene, there is much to nourish him. If he drudges, it is with his brother, and for his father and mother, whom he loves, and would fain shield from want. Wisdom is not ban-

[1] Caesar, by leading his army across the little river Rubicon in northern Italy, started the Civil War which resulted in the overthrow of Pompey and his own control of the Roman world.

[2] Probably this is a mistake. If Burns had received a university education, he might not have continued to write as a peasant in the Scottish dialect. His attempts at poems in literary English in the style of the day arouse no regret that he did not write more in that vein. Burns did not fail as a poet, but as a man; as a poet he succeeded admirably. As Andrew Lang, a great Scotch critic of recent days, says: "One fails to see how any change of worldly circumstances could have bettered the true work of Burns." Carlyle's regret that Burns did not receive a university education is not shared by Lockhart, who questions whether Burns was improved by the reading and study that he did do and that led him mistakenly to imitate accepted literary models. (Lockhart's *Life*, pp. 326, 327.)

ished from this poor hearth, nor the balm of natural feeling: the solemn words, *Let us worship God*, are heard there from a 'priest-like father;'[1] if threatenings of unjust men throw mother and children into tears,[2] these are tears not of grief only, but of holiest affection; every heart in that humble group feels itself the closer knit to every other; in their hard warfare they are there together, a 'little band of brethren.' Neither are such tears, and the deep beauty that dwells in them, their only portion. Light visits the hearts as it does the eyes of all living: there is a force, too, in this youth, that enables him to trample on misfortune; nay, to bind it under his feet to make him sport. For a bold, warm, buoyant humour of character has been given him; and so the thick-coming shapes of evil are welcomed with a gay, friendly irony, and in their closest pressure he bates no jot of heart or hope. Vague yearnings of ambition fail not, as he grows up; dreamy fancies hang like cloud-cities around him; the curtain of Existence is slowly rising, in many-coloured splendour and gloom: and the auroral light of first love is gilding his horizon, and the music of song is on his path; and so he walks

. . . in glory and in joy,
Behind his plough, upon the mountain side.[3]

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[1]Lockhart (p. 77) quotes from Gilbert Burns: "Robert had frequently remarked to me, that he thought there was something peculiarly venerable in the phrase, 'Let us worship God,' used by a decent sober head of a family introducing family worship. To this sentiment of the author the world is indebted for the *Cotter's Saturday Night*."

[2]Burns wrote, "My indignation yet boils at the recollection of the scoundrel factor's insolent letters, which used to set us all in tears." (Lockhart, p. 19) *Factor* is the Scotch term for agent or steward.

[3]Inaccurately quoted from Wordsworth's "Leech-Gatherer":

42. We ourselves know, from the best evidence, that up to this date Burns was happy; nay, that he was the gayest, brightest, most fantastic, fascinating being to be found in the world; more so even than he afterwards appeared. But now, at this early age, he quits the paternal roof; goes forth into looser, louder, more exciting society; and becomes initiated in those dissipations,[1] those vices which a certain class of philosophers have asserted to be a natural preparative for entering on active life; a kind of mud-bath, in which the youth is, as it were, necessitated to sleep, and, we suppose, cleanse himself, before the real toga of Manhood[2] can be laid on him. We shall not dispute much with this class of philosophers; we hope they are mistaken; for Sin and Remorse so easily beset us at all stages of life, and are always such indifferent company, that it seems hard we should, at any stage, be forced and fated not only to meet but to yield to them, and even serve for a term in their leprous armada. We hope it is not so. Clear we are, at all events, it cannot be the training one receives in this Devil's service, but only our determining to desert from it, that fits us for true manly Action. We become men, not after we have been dissipated, and disappointed in the chase of false pleasure; but after we have as-

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"I thought of Chatterton, the marvellous Boy,
The sleepless soul that perished in his pride;
Of Him who walked in glory and in joy,
Following his plough, along the mountain-side."

[1]Burns wrote of his residence at Irvine: "Scenes of swaggering riot and roaring dissipation were till this time new to me. Here I learnt to fill my glass, and to mix without fear in a drunken squabble."

[2]When a Roman free-born boy reached the age of maturity, he went through a formal ceremony of admission to citizenship, a part of which consisted in clothing him with the "toga of Manhood" or *toga virilis*.

certained, in any way, what impassable barriers hem us in through this life; how mad it is to hope for contentment to our infinite soul from the *gifts* of this extremely finite world; that a man must be sufficient for himself; and that for suffering and enduring there is no remedy but striving and doing. Manhood begins when we have in any way made truce with Necessity; begins even when we have surrendered to Necessity, as the most part only do; but begins joyfully and hopefully only when we have reconciled ourselves to Necessity; and thus, in reality, triumphed over it, and felt that in Necessity we are free. Surely, such lessons as this last, which, in one shape or other, is the grand lesson for every mortal man, are better learned from the lips of a devout mother, in the looks and actions of a devout father, while the heart is yet soft and pliant, than in collision with the sharp adamant of Fate, attracting us to shipwreck us,[1] when the heart is grown hard, and may be broken before it will become contrite. Had Burns continued to learn this, as he was already learning it, in his father's cottage, he would have learned it fully, which he never did; and been saved many a lasting aberration, many a bitter hour and year of remorseful sorrow.

43. It seems to us another circumstance of fatal import in Burns's history, that at this time too he became involved in the religious quarrels of his district; that he was enlisted and feasted, as the fighting man of the New-Light Priesthood,[2] in their highly unprofitable warfare. At the tables of these free-minded clergy, he learned much more than was need-

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[1]The reference is to the medieval belief that somewhere in the eastern seas was an island of adamant, which, acting as a magnet, drew to it and wrecked all ships within the reach of its attraction.

[2]See note to paragraph 2.

glory, but his first duty, and the true medicine for ened in his mind scruples about Religion itself; and a whole world of Doubts, which it required quite another set of conjurors than these men to exorcise.[1] We do not say that such an intellect as his could have escaped similar doubts, at some period of his history; or even that he could, at a later period, have come through them altogether victorious and unharmed: but it seems peculiarly unfortunate that this time, above all others, should have been fixed for the encounter. For now, with principles assailed by evil example from without, by 'passions raging like demons'[2] from within, he had little need of skeptical misgivings to whisper treason in the heat of the battle, or to cut off his retreat if he were already defeated. He loses his feeling of innocence; his mind is at variance with itself; the old divinity no longer presides there; but wild Desires and wild Repentance alternately oppress him. Ere long, too, he has committed himself before the world; his character for sobriety, dear to a Scottish peasant as few corrupted worldlings can even conceive, is destroyed in the eyes of men; and his only refuge consists in trying to disbelieve his guiltiness, and is but a refuge of lies. The blackest desperation now gathers over him, broken only by red lightnings of remorse. The whole fabric

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[1]There is an implied comparison here between doubts and evil spirits, which priests among superstitious people are often called upon to *exorcise*, that is, to drive away by various religious rites. Persons who summoned or cast out evil spirits by magic rather than by religion were called *conjurors*.

[2]Burns said of himself: "My passions, once lighted up, raged like so many devils, till they found vent in rhyme; and then the conning over my verses, like a spell, soothed all into quiet." (Lockhart, p. 36.)

of his life is blasted asunder: for now not only his character, but his personal liberty, is to be lost: men and Fortune are leagued for his hurt; 'hungry Ruin has him in the wind.' He sees no escape but the saddest of all: exile from his loved country, to a country in every sense inhospitable and abhorrent to him. While the 'gloomy night is gathering fast,'[1] in mental storm and solitude, as well as in physical, he sings his wild farewell to Scotland:

> Farewell my friends, farewell my foes!
> My peace with these, my love with those:
> The bursting tears my heart declare;
> Adieu, my native banks of Ayr!

44. Light breaks suddenly in on him in floods; but still a false transitory light, and no real sunshine. He is invited to Edinburgh; hastens thither with anticipating heart; is welcomed as in a triumph, and with universal blandishment and acclamation; whatever is wisest, whatever is greatest, or loveliest there, gathers round him, to gaze on his face, to show him honour, sympathy, affection. Burns's appearance among the sages and nobles of Edinburgh, must be regarded as one of the most singular phenomena in modern Literature; almost like the appearance of some Napoleon among the crowned sovereigns of modern Politics. For it is nowise as 'a mockery king,'[2] set there by favour, transiently, and for a purpose, that he will let himself be treated; still less is he a mad Rienzi, whose sudden elevation turns his too weak

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[1]The first line of "The Author's Farewell to his Native Country," written in 1786, when Burns was about to set out for the West Indies. The four lines that follow are the conclusion of the same poem. The last line should be, "Farewell, the bonnie banks of Ayr!"

[2]Shakespeare, *Richard II*, Act IV, Sc. 1, 257.

head;[1] but he stands there on his own basis; cool, unastonished, holding his equal rank from Nature herself; putting forth no claim which there is not strength *in* him, as well as about him, to vindicate. Mr. Lockhart has some forcible observations on this point:

'It needs no effort of imagination,' says he, 'to conceive what the sensations of an isolated set of scholars (almost all either clergymen or professors) must have been in the presence of this big-boned, black-browed, brawny stranger, with his great flashing eyes, who, having forced his way among them from the plough-tail, at a single stride, manifested in the whole strain of his bearing and conversation, a most thorough conviction that in the society of the most eminent men of his nation, he was exactly where he was entitled to be; hardly deigned to flatter them by exhibiting even an occasional symptom of being flattered by their notice; by turns calmly measured himself against the most cultivated understandings of his time in discussion; overpowered the *bon mots*[2] of the most celebrated convivialists by broad floods of merriment, impregnated with all the burning life of genius; astounded bosoms habitually enveloped in the thrice-piled folds of social reserve, by compelling them to tremble,—nay, to tremble visibly,—beneath the fearless touch of natural pathos; and all this without indicating the smallest willingness to be ranked among

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[1]Niccolo Rienzi (1313-54), a medieval Roman of low birth, who succeeded in establishing for a time a republic in Rome. of which he was head under the title of Tribune. His overthrow by the Roman nobles was partly due to his own rashness and arrogance.

[2]Most editors correct to the modern plural, which is the proper French form, *bons mots;* but all early editions of the Essay follow Lockhart in printing *bon mots*, which was in common use in the 18th century in England. This is a French phrase naturalized in English and means "clever sayings."

those professional ministers of excitement, who are content to be paid in money and smiles for doing what the spectators and auditors would be ashamed of doing in their own persons, even if they had the power of doing it; and last, and probably worst of all, who was known to be in the habit of enlivening societies which they would have scorned to approach, still more frequently than their own, with eloquence no less magnificent; with wit, in all likelihood still more daring; often enough, as the superiors whom he fronted without alarm might have guessed from the beginning, and had, ere long, no occasion to guess, with wit pointed at themselves.'

45. The farther we remove from this scene, the more singular will it seem to us: details of the exterior aspect of it are already full of interest. Most readers recollect Mr. Walker's personal interview with Burns as among the best passages of his Narrative: a time will come when this reminiscence of Sir Walter Scott's, slight though it is, will also be precious.

'As for Burns,' writes Sir Walter,[1] 'I may truly say,[2] *Virgilium vidi tantum.* I was a lad of fifteen in 1786-7, when he came first to Edinburgh, but had sense and feeling enough to be much interested in his poetry, and would have given the world to know him: but I had very little acquaintance with any literary people, and still less with the gentry of the west country, the two sets that he most frequented. Mr. Thomas Grierson was at that time a clerk of my father's. He knew Burns, and promised to ask him to his lodgings to dinner, but had no opportunity to keep his word; otherwise I might have seen more of this distinguished man. As it was, I saw him one day at the late venerable Professor Ferguson's, where there were several gentlemen of literary reputation, among whom

[1] This is taken from Lockhart, pp. 117-120.

[2] "Virgil I merely saw," from Ovid, *Tristia*, IV, 10, 1.51. Ovid, the Roman poet, as a boy saw Virgil, his great predecessor, even as Scott saw Burns.

I remember the celebrated Mr. Dugald Stewart. Of course, we youngsters sat silent, looked and listened. The only thing I remember which was remarkable in Burns's manner, was the effect produced upon him by a print of Bunbury's representing a soldier lying dead on the snow, his dog sitting in misery on one side,—on the other, his widow, with a child in her arms. These lines were written beneath:

"Cold on Canadian hills, or Minden's plain,
Perhaps that mother wept her soldier slain;
Bent o'er her babe, her eye dissolved in dew,—
The big drops mingling with the milk he drew,
Gave the sad presage of his future years,
The child of misery, baptized in tears."[1]

'Burns seemed much affected by the print, or rather by the ideas which it suggested to his mind. He actually shed tears. He asked whose the lines were, and it chanced that nobody but myself remembered that they occur in a half-forgotten poem of Langhorne's, called by the unpromising title of "The Justice of Peace." I whispered my information to a friend present, he mentioned it to Burns, who rewarded me with a look and a word, which, though of mere civility, I then received and still recollect with very great pleasure.

'His person was strong and robust; his manners rustic, not clownish; a sort of dignified plainness and simplicity, which received part of its effect perhaps from one's knowledge of his extraordinary talents. His features are represented in Mr. Nasmyth's picture; but to me it conveys the idea that they are diminished, as if seen in perspective. I think his countenance was more massive than it looks in

[1] From John Langhorne's *Country Justice* (1774-7); the reference is to the events of the year 1759, when English soldiers fought at Quebec and at Minden in Germany. Scott quoted the title of the poem a little inaccurately.

any of the protraits. I should have taken the poet, had I not known what he was, for a very sagacious country farmer of the old Scotch school, *i. e.* none of your modern agriculturists who keep labourers for their drudgery, but the *douce gudeman* who held his own plough. There was a strong expression of sense and shrewdness in all his lineaments; the eye alone, I think, indicated the poetical character and temperament. It was large, and of a dark cast, which glowed (I say literally *glowed*) when he spoke with feeling or interest. I never saw such another eye in a human head, though I have seen the most distinguished men of my time. His conversation expressed perfect self-confidence, without the slightest presumption. Among the men who were the most learned of their time and country, he expressed himself with perfect firmness, but without the least intrusive forwardness; and when he differed in opinion, he did not hesitate to express it firmly, yet at the same time with modesty. I do not remember any part of his conversation distinctly enough to be quoted; nor did I ever see him again, except in the street, where he did not recognise me, as I could not expect he should. He was much caressed in Edinburgh: but (considering what literary emoluments have been since his day) the efforts made for his relief were extremely trifling.

'I remember, on this occasion I mention, I thought Burns's acquaintance with English poetry was rather limited; and also, that having twenty times the ability of Allan Ramsey and of Fergusson,[1] he talked of them with too much humility as his models: there was doubtless national predilection in his estimate.

'This is all I can tell you about Burns. I have only

[1]See "Introduction" for Burns's acknowledgment of indebtedness to these poets. Scott's opinions expressed here are extraordinarily mature for a fifteen-year-old boy; he may have unconsciously read into his recollection some of his later thoughts. On the other hand, his own knowledge of English poetry was great even at this age.

to add, that his dress corresponded with his manner. He was like a farmer dressed in his best to dine with the laird. I do not speak *in malam partem*, when I say, I never saw a man in company with his superiors in station or information more perfectly free from either the reality or the affectation of embarrassment. I was told, but did not observe it, that his address to females was extremely deferential, and always with a turn either to the pathetic or humorous, which engaged their attention particularly. I have heard the late Duchess of Gordon remark this.—I do not know anything I can add to these recollections of forty years since.'

46. The conduct of Burns under this dazzling blaze of favour; the calm, unaffected, manly manner, in which he not only bore it, but estimated its value, has justly been regarded as the best proof that could be given of his real vigour and integrity of mind. A little natural vanity, some touches of hypocritical modesty, some glimmerings of affectation, at least some fear of being thought affected, we could have pardoned in almost any man; but no such indication is to be traced here. In his unexampled situation the young peasant is not a moment perplexed; so many strange lights do not confuse him, do not lead him astray. Nevertheless, we cannot but perceive that this winter did him great and lasting injury. A somewhat clearer knowledge of men's affairs, scarcely of their characters, it did afford him; but a sharper feeling of Fortune's unequal arrangements in their social destiny it also left with him.[1] He had seen the gay and

[1] Burns himself expressed this feeling in a letter to Mrs. Dunlop quoted by Lockhart (p. 217); "When I must stalk into a corner, lest the rattling equipage of some gaping blockhead should mangle me in the mire, I am tempted to exclaim—what merits had he had, or what demerits have I had that he is ushered into this state of being with

gorgeous arena, in which the powerful are born to play their parts; nay had himself stood in the midst of it; and he felt more bitterly than ever, that here he was but a looker-on, and had no part or lot in that splendid game. From this time a jealous indignant fear of social degradation takes possession of him; and perverts, so far as aught could pervert, his private contentment, and his feelings towards his richer fellows. It was clear to Burns that he had talent enough to make a fortune, or a hundred fortunes, could he but have rightly willed this; it was clear also that he willed something far different, and therefore could not make one. Unhappy it was that he had not power to choose the one, and reject the other; but must halt for ever between two opinions, two objects; making hampered advancement towards either. But so is it with many men: we 'long for the merchandise, yet would fain keep the price;' and so stand chaffering with Fate, in vexatious altercation, till the night come, and our fair is over!

47. The Edinburgh Learned of that period were in general more noted for clearness of head than for warmth of heart: with the exception of the good old Blacklock,[1] whose help was too ineffectual, scarcely one among them seems to have looked at Burns with any true sympathy, or indeed much otherwise than as at a highly curious *thing*. By the great also he is treated in the customary fashion; entertained at their tables and dismissed: certain modica of pudding and praise are, from time to time, gladly exchanged for the fascination of his presence; which exchange once effected, the bargain is finished, and each party goes

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the sceptre of rule in his puny fist, and I kicked into the world, the sport of folly, or the victim of pride?"

[1]See "Introduction."

his several way. At the end of this strange season, Burns gloomily sums up his gains and losses, and meditates on the chaotic future. In money he is somewhat richer; in fame and the show of happiness, infinitely richer; but in the substance of it, as poor as ever. Nay poorer; for his heart is now maddened still more with the fever of worldly Ambition; and through long years the disease will rack him with unprofitable sufferings, and weaken his strength for all true and nobler aims.

48. What Burns was next to do or to avoid; how a man so circumstanced was now to guide himself towards his true advantage, might at this point of time have been a question for the wisest. It was a question, too, which apparently he was left altogether to answer for himself: of his learned or rich patrons it had not struck any individual to turn a thought on this so trivial matter. Without claiming for Burns the praise of perfect sagacity, we must say, that his Excise and Farm scheme does not seem to us a very unreasonable one; that we should be at a loss, even now, to suggest one decidedly better. Certain of his admirers have felt scandalized at his ever resolving to *gauge;*[1] and would have had him lie at the pool, till the spirit of Patronage stirred the waters, that so, with one friendly plunge, all his sorrows might be healed.[2] Unwise counsellors! They know not the manner of this spirit; and how, in the lap of most golden dreams, a man might have happiness, were it not that in the interim he must die of hunger! It

[1]Probably aimed at Lockhart; see "Introduction."

[2]The reference is to the story in John V, 2-9, of the pool of Bethseda: "For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in, was made whole of whatsoever disease he had."

reflects credit on the manliness and sound sense of Burns, that he felt so early on what ground he was standing; and preferred self-help, on the humblest scale, to dependence and inaction, though with hope of far more splendid possibilities. But even these possibilities were not rejected in this scheme: he might expect, if it chanced that he *had* any friend, to rise, in no long period, into something even like opulence and leisure; while again, if it chanced that he had no friend, he could still live in security; and for the rest, he 'did not intend to borrow honour from any profession.'[1] We think, then, that his plan was honest and well-calculated: all turned on the execution of it. Doubtless it failed; yet not, we believe, from any vice inherent in itself. Nay after all, it was no failure of external means, but of internal that overtook Burns. His was no bankruptcy of the purse, but of the soul; to his last day, he owed no man anything.[2]

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[1]Lockhart (p. 207) quotes as follows from Burns: "There is a certain stigma . . . in the name of Exciseman; but I do not intend to borrow honour from any profession."

[2]Lockhart (p. 281) quotes from Burns's letter to Mr. Macmurdo in December, 1793: "I have owed you money longer than ever I owed it to any man.—Here is Ker's account, and here are six guineas; and now, I don't owe a shilling to man, or woman either." Lockhart writes (p. 310): "Burns was an honest man: after all his struggles, he owed no man a shilling when he died." It would perhaps be more accurate to say that he left more than enough property to pay his small outstanding debts. Some of Burns's biographers have misinterpreted two letters that he wrote shortly before his death, one to George Thomson and one to his cousin, James Burnes of Montrose, asking for a loan of ten pounds to pay a merchant who was threatening to sue him for the sum. These letters have been regarded as evidence of the poet's extreme poverty, whereas he seems merely to have been at the time in need

49. Meanwhile he begins well: with two good and wise actions. His donation to his mother, munificent from a man whose income had lately been seven pounds a-year, was worthy of him, and not more than worthy. Generous also, and worthy of him, was the treatment of the woman whose life's welfare now depended on his pleasure.[1] A friendly observer might have hoped serene days for him: his mind is on the true road to peace with itself: what clearness he still wants will be given as he proceeds; for the best teacher of duties, that still lie dim to us, is the Practice of those we see, and have at hand. Had the 'patrons of genius,' who could give him nothing, but taken nothing from him, at least nothing more! The wounds of his heart would have healed, vulgar ambition would have died away. Toil and Frugality would have been welcome, since Virtue dwelt with them; and Poetry would have shone through them as of old; and in her clear ethereal light, which was his own by birthright, he might have looked down on his earthly destiny, and all its obstructions, not with patience only, but with love.

50. But the patrons of genius would not have it so. Picturesque tourists,[2] all manner of fashionable

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of ready money, probably on account of the extra expenses of his illness.

[1]The reference is to his public acknowledgment of Jean Armour as his wife; the legal proof of the original marriage had been destroyed by her father.

[2]Carlyle himself inserts the following note here: "There is one little sketch by certain 'English gentlemen' of this class, which, though adopted in Currie's Narrative, and since then repeated in most others, we have all along felt an invincible disposition to regard as imaginary: 'On a rock that projected into the stream, they saw a man employed in angling, of a singular appearance. He had a cap made of fox-skin on his head, a loose great-coat fixed

danglers after literature, and, far worse, all manner of convivial Mecaenases,[1] hovered round him in his retreat; and his good as well as his weak qualities secured them influence over him. He was flattered by their notice; and his warm social nature made it impossible for him to shake them off, and hold on his way apart from them. These men, as we believe, were proximately the means of his ruin. Not that they meant him any ill; they only meant themselves a little good; if he suffered harm, let *him* look to it! But they wasted his precious time and his precious talent; they disturbed his composure, broke down his returning habits of temperance and assiduous contented exertion. Their pampering was baneful to him; their cruelty, which soon followed, was equally baneful. The old grudge against Fortune's inequality awoke with new bitterness in their neighbourhood, and Burns had no retreat but to 'the Rock of Independence,' which is but an air-castle, after all,

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round him by a belt, from which depended an enormous Highland broad-sword. It was Burns.' Now, we rather think, it was *not* Burns. For, to say nothing of the fox-skin cap, the loose and quite Hibernian watch-coat with the belt, what are we to make of this 'enormous Highland broad-sword' depending from him? More especially, as there is no word of parish constables on the outlook to see whether, as Dennis phrases it, he had an eye to his own midriff or that of the public! Burns, of all men, had the least need, and the least tendency, to seek for distinction, either in his own eyes, or those of others, by such poor mummeries."

[1]So spelled in all the early editions; the accepted spelling is Maecenas, the name of a noble Roman patron of letters, the friend of Augustus and of Horace and Virgil (73 B. C.-8 A.D.). The plural is used here to refer to the shallow aristocrats who pretended to be his patrons, but only drank and caroused with him.

that looks well at a distance, but will screen no one from real wind and wet. Flushed with irregular excitement, exasperated alternately by contempt of others, and contempt of himself, Burns was no longer regaining his peace of mind, but fast losing it for ever. There was a hollowness at the heart of his life, for his conscience did not now approve what he was doing.

51. Amid the vapours of unwise enjoyment, of bootless remorse, and angry discontentment with Fate, his true loadstar, a life of Poetry, with Poverty, nay with Famine if it must be so, was too often altogether hidden from his eyes. And yet he sailed a sea, where without some such loadstar there was no right steering. Meteors of French Politics rise before him, but these were not *his* stars. An accident this, which hastened, but did not originate, his worst distresses. In the mad contentions of that time, he comes in collision with certain official Superiors;[1] is wounded by them; cruelly lacerated, we should say, could a dead mechanical implement, in any case, be called cruel; and shrinks, in indignant pain, into deeper self-seclusion, into gloomier moodiness than ever. His life has now lost its unity: it is a life of fragments; led with little aim, beyond the melancholy one of securing its own continuance,—in fits of wild false joy, when such

[1]Burns was democratic in his sympathies and was, therefore, interested in the French Revolution, to which the aristocratic government of Great Britain was bitterly opposed. His "collision" with his "official Superiors" was caused by his sending to the French Convention some guns seized in the course of his duties from a smuggling vessel. Lockhart (pp. 232-42) tells the story of Burns's indiscreet conduct in this affair and his rebuke by the Excise Board. He contends that Burns was treated very leniently and suffered no penalty beyond a reprimand, which was not humiliating in its nature.

offered, and of black despondency when they passed away. His character before the world begins to suffer: calumny is busy with him; for a miserable man makes more enemies than friends. Some faults he has fallen into, and a thousand misfortunes; but deep criminality is what he stands accused of, and they that are *not* without sin cast the first stone at him![1] For is he not a well-wisher to the French Revolution, a Jacobin,[2] and therefore in that one act guilty of all? These accusations, political and moral, it has since appeared, were false enough: but the world hesitated little to credit them. Nay, his convivial Mecaenases themselves were not the last to do it. There is reason to believe that, in his later years, the Dumfries Aristocracy had partly withdrawn themselves from Burns, as from a tainted person no longer worthy of their acquaintance. That painful class, stationed, in all provincial cities, behind the outmost breastwork of Gentility, there to stand siege and do battle against the intrusions of Grocerdom and Grazierdom, had actually seen dishonour in the society of Burns, and branded him with their veto; had, as we vulgarly say, *cut* him! We find one passage in this Work of Mr. Lockhart's, which will not out of our thoughts:

'A gentleman of that country, whose name I have already more than once had occasion to refer to, has

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[1]See John VIII. 7, where Jesus said to the accusers of a certain woman, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her."

[2]Originally a member of a French revolutionary club which organized the Reign of Terror. The name was applied to any sympathizer with the French Revolution, and has been since used of any revolutionist or political radical. Be careful not to confuse with Jacobite (see note to paragraph 36). Carlyle is, of course, ironical in this sentence.

often told me that he was seldom more grieved, than when riding into Dumfries one fine summer evening about this time to attend a county ball, he saw Burns walking alone, on the shady side of the principal street of the town, while the opposite side was gay with successive groups of gentlemen and ladies, all drawn together for the festivities of the night, not one of whom appeared willing to recognize him. The horseman dismounted, and joined Burns, who on his proposing to cross the street said: "Nay, nay, my young friend, that's all over now;" and quoted, after a pause, some verses of Lady Grizzel Baillie's pathetic ballad:

"His bonnet stood ance fu' fair on his brow,
His auld ane look'd better than mony ane's new;
But now he lets 't wear ony way it will hing,
And casts himself dowie upon the corn-bing.

O were we young, as we ance hae been,[1]
We sud hae been galloping down on yon green,
And linking it ower the lily-white lea!
And werena my heart light I wad die."

It was little in Burns's character to let his feelings on certain subjects escape in this fashion. He, immediately after reciting these verses, assumed the sprightliness of his most pleasing manner; and taking his young friend home with him, entertained him very agreeably till the hour of the ball arrived.'

52. Alas! when we think that Burns now sleeps 'where bitter indignation can no longer lacerate his heart,'[2] and that most of those fair dames and frizzled gentlemen already lie at his side, where the

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[1]Pronounce *been* to rhyme with *green* and *die* to rhyme with *lea.*

[2]Carlyle's note: *Ubi saeva indignatio cor utterius lacerare nequit.*—Swift's epitaph.

breastwork of gentility is quite thrown down,—who would not sigh over the thin delusions and foolish toys that divide heart from heart, and make man unmerciful to his brother!

53. It was not now to be hoped that the genius of Burns would ever reach maturity, or accomplish aught worthy of itself. His spirit was jarred in its melody; not the soft breath of natural feeling, but the rude hand of Fate, was now sweeping over the strings. And yet what harmony was in him, what music even in his discords! How the wild tones had a charm for the simplest and the wisest; and all men felt and knew that here also was one of the Gifted! 'If he entered an inn at midnight, after all the inmates were in bed, the news of his arrival circulated from the cellar to the garret; and ere ten minutes had elapsed, the landlord and all his guests were assembled![1] Some brief pure moments of poetic life were yet appointed him, in the composition of his Songs. We can understand how he grasped at this employment; and how, too, he spurned all other reward for it but what the labour itself brought him.[2] For the soul of Burns, though scathed and marred, was yet living in its full moral strength, though sharply conscious of its errors and abasement: and here, in his destitution and degradation, was one act

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[1]Lockhart, pp. 207, 208.

[2]Lockhart (p. 282) quotes Burns's letter to George Thomson, for whose *Select Collection of Original Scottish Airs* Burns furnished a number of songs: "As to any remuneration, you may think my songs either above or below price; for they shall absolutely be the one or the other. In the honest enthusiasm with which I embark in your undertaking, to talk of money, wages, fee, hire, etc., would be downright prostitution."

of seeming nobleness and self-devotedness left even for him to perform. He felt, too, that with all the 'thoughtless follies' that had 'laid him low,'[1] the world was unjust and cruel to him; and he silently appealed to another and calmer time. Not as a hired soldier, but as a patriot, would he strive for the glory of his country: so he cast from him the poor sixpence a-day, and served zealously as a volunteer. Let us not grudge him this last luxury of his existence; let him not have appealed to us in vain! The money was not necessary to him; he struggled through without it: long since, these guineas would have been gone, and now the high-mindedness of refusing them will plead for him in all hearts for ever.

54. We are here arrived at the crisis of Burns's life; for matters had now taken such a shape with him as could not long continue. If improvement was not to be looked for, Nature could only for a limited time maintain this dark and maddening warfare against the world and itself. We are not medically informed whether any continuance of years was, at this period, probable for Burns; whether his death is to be looked on as in some sense an accidental event, or only as the natural consequence of the long series of events that had preceded. The latter seems to be the likelier opinion; and yet it is by no means a certain one. At all events, as we have said, *some* change could not be very distant. Three gates of deliverance, it seems to us, were open for Burns: clear poetical activity; madness; or death. The first, with longer life, was still possible, though not probable; for physical causes were beginning to be concerned in it: and yet Burns had an iron resolution; could he but have seen and felt, that not only his highest

[1] From Burns's poem on himself, called "A Bard's Epitaph."

glory, but his first duty, and the true medicine for all his woes, lay here. The second was still less probable; for his mind was ever among the clearest and firmest. So the milder third gate was opened for him: and he passed, not softly, yet speedily, into that still country, where the hail-storms and fire-showers do not reach, and the heaviest-laden wayfarer at length lays down his load!

55. Contemplating this sad end of Burns, and how he sank unaided by any real help, uncheered by any wise sympathy, generous minds have sometimes figured to themselves, with a reproachful sorrow, that much might have been done for him; that by counsel, true affection, and friendly ministrations, he might have been saved to himself and the world. We question whether there is not more tenderness of heart than soundness of judgment in these suggestions. It seems dubious to us whether the richest, wisest, most benevolent individual could have lent Burns any effectual help. Counsel, which seldom profits any one, he did not need; in his understanding, he knew the right from the wrong, as well perhaps as any man ever did; but the persuasion, which would have availed him, lies not so much in the head as in the heart, where no argument or expostulation could have assisted much to implant it. As to money again, we do not believe that this was his essential want; or well see how any private man could, even presupposing Burns's consent, have bestowed on him an independent fortune, with much prospect of decisive advantage. It is a mortifying truth, that two men in any rank of society could hardly be found virtuous enough to give money, and to take it as a necessary gift, without injury to the moral entireness of one or both. But so stands the fact: Friendship, in the old heroic sense of that term, no longer exists; except in the cases of

kindred or other legal affinity, it is in reality no longer expected, or recognised as a virtue among men. A close observer of manners has pronounced 'Patronage,' that is, pecuniary or other economic furtherance, to be 'twice cursed;' cursing him that gives, and him that takes![1] And thus, in regard to outward matters also it has become the rule, as in regard to inward it always was and must be the rule, that no one shall look for effectual help to another; but that each shall rest contented with what help he can afford himself. Such, we say, is the principle of modern Honour; naturally enough growing out of that sentiment of Pride, which we inculcate and encourage as the basis of our whole social morality. Many a poet has been poorer than Burns; but no one was ever prouder: we may question whether, without great precautions, even a pension from Royalty would not have galled and encumbered, more than actually assisted him.

56. Still less, therefore, are we disposed to join with another class of Burns's admirers, who accuse the higher ranks among us of having ruined Burns by their selfish neglect of him.[2] We have already stated our doubts whether direct pecuniary help, had

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[1]There is a reference here to the famous lines from the *Merchant of Venice* (Act IV, Sc. I, 190-93):

> "The quality of mercy is not strained,
> It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven
> Upon the place beneath: it is twice blest;
> It blesseth him that gives, and him that takes."

[2]Carlyle probably has in mind several passages in Lockhart's *Life*, of which the following is representative: "The great poet himself, whose name is enough to ennoble his children's children, was, to the eternal disgrace of his country, suffered to live and die in penury, and as far as such a creature could be degraded by any external circumstance, in degradation." (p. 306).

it been offered, would have been accepted, or could have proved very effectual. We shall readily admit, however, that much was to be done for Burns; that many a poisoned arrow might have been warded from his bosom; many an entanglement in his path cut asunder by the hand of the powerful; and light and heat, shed on him from high places, would have made his humble atmosphere more genial; and the softest heart then breathing might have lived and died with some fewer pangs. Nay, we shall grant farther, and for Burns it is granting much, that, with all his pride, he would have thanked, even with exaggerated gratitude, any one who had cordially befriended him: patronage, unless once cursed, needed not to have been twice so. At all events, the poor promotion he desired in his calling might have been granted: it was his own scheme, therefore likelier than any other to be of service. All this it might have been a luxury, nay it was a duty, for our nobility to have done. No part of all this, however, did any of them do; or apparently attempt, or wish to do: so much is granted against them. But what then is the amount of their blame? Simply that they were men of the world, and walked by the principles of such men; that they treated Burns, as other nobles and other commoners had done other poets; as the English did Shakspeare; as King Charles and his Cavaliers did Butler, as King Philip and his Grandees did Cervantes.[1] Do men gather grapes of thorns, or shall we cut down

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[1]Charles II neglected to reward Samuel Butler for his services to the Royalist cause. Cervantes (1547-1616), the author of the great Spanish romance of *Don Quixote*, was similarly neglected by Philip II and Philip III of Spain. Shakspeare's genius was hardly rewarded as it deserved, but he was not neglected or ill-used in any way.

our thorns for yielding only a *fence*, and haws? How, indeed, could the 'nobility and gentry of his native land' hold out any help to this 'Scottish Bard, proud of his name and country?' Were the nobility and gentry so much as able rightly to help themselves? Had they not their game to preserve; their borough interests to strengthen;[1] dinners, therefore, of various kinds to eat and give? Were their means more than adequate to all this business, or less than adequate? Less than adequate, in general: few of them in reality were richer than Burns; many of them were poorer; for sometimes they had to wring their supplies, as with thumbscrews,[2] from the hard hand; and, in their need of guineas, to forget their duty of mercy; which Burns was never reduced to do. Let us pity and forgive them. The game they preserved and shot, the dinners they ate and gave, the borough interests they strengthened, the *little* Babylons they severally builded by the glory of their might,[3] are all melted, or melting back into the primeval Chaos, as man's

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[1]The landed aristocracy of England and Scotland are much interested in protecting and hunting game-birds and animals on their large estates. They also take an important share in politics, frequently representing their boroughs in Parliament or endeavoring to secure the election of members who will carry out policies favorable to their class. Building up political support for themselves in their own locality is called *strengthening their borough interests.*

[2]Medieval instruments of torture. The idea is that in difficult times, the landlord could obtain rent from his tenants only by the most severe measures.

[3]Daniel IV, 30: "The king spoke and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty?" This great Babylon is as completely dead as the *little* Babylons here referred to.

merely selfish endeavours are fated to do: and here was an action, extending in virtue of its worldly influence, we may say, through all time; in virtue of its moral nature, beyond all time, being immortal as the Spirit of Goodness itself; this action was offered them to do, and light was not given them to do it. Let us pity and forgive them. But better than pity, let us go and *do otherwise*. Human suffering did not end with the life of Burns; neither was the solemn mandate, 'Love one another, bear one another's burdens,'[1] given to the rich only, but to all men. True, we shall find no Burns to relieve, to assuage by our aid or our pity; but celestial natures, groaning under the fardels of a weary life,[2] we shall still find; and that wretchedness which Fate has rendered *voiceless* and *tuneless*, is not the least wretched, but the most.

57. Still we do think that the blame of Burns's failure lies chiefly with the world. The world, it seems to us, treated him with more, rather than with less kindness, than it usually shows to such men. It has ever, we fear, shown but small favour to its Teachers: hunger and nakedness, perils and revilings, the prison, the cross, the poison-chalice, have, in most times and countries, been the market-price it has offered for Wisdom, the welcome with which it has greeted those who have come to enlighten and purify it. Homer[3] and Socrates, and the Christian Apostles,

[1]These are really two mandates, for they do not occur together in the Bible. The first is found nine times in the New Testament; the second in *Galatians* VI, 2.

[2]*Hamlet*, Act III, Sc. I, 76, 77 (from Hamlet's famous soliloquy):

> . . . "who would fardels bear,
> To grunt and sweat under a weary life?"

[3]It is difficult to see why Homer should be included among the Martyrs, though tradition has it that he was poor as well as blind.

belong to old days; but the world's Martyrology was not completed with these. Roger Bacon and Galileo languish in priestly dungeons; Tasso pines in the cell of a madhouse; Camoens dies begging on the streets of Lisbon. So neglected, so 'persecuted they the Prophets,'[1] not in Judea only, but in all places where men have been. We reckon that every poet of Burns's order is, or should be, a prophet and teacher to his age; that he has no right to expect great kindness from it, but rather is bound to do it great kindness; that Burns, in particular, experienced fully the usual proportion of the world's goodness; and that the blame of his failure, as we have said, lies not chiefly with the world.

58. Where then does it lie? We are forced to answer: With himself; it is his inward, not his outward misfortunes, that bring him to the dust. Seldom, indeed, is it otherwise; seldom is a life morally wrecked but the grand cause lies in some internal mal-arrangement, some want less of good fortune than of good guidance. Nature fashions no creature without implanting in it the strength needful for its action and duration; least of all does she so neglect her masterpiece and darling, the poetic soul. Neither can we believe that it is in the power of *any* external circumstances utterly to ruin the mind of a man; nay, if proper wisdom be given him, even so much as to affect its essential health and beauty. The sternest sum-total of all worldly misfortunes is Death; nothing more *can* lie in the cup of human woe: yet many men, in all ages, have triumphed over Death, and led it captive; converting its physical victory into a moral victory for themselves, into a seal and immortal consecration for all that their past life had achieved. What has been done, may be done

[1] *Matthew* V, 12.

again: nay, it is but the degree and not the kind of such heroism that differs in different seasons; for without some portion of this spirit, not of boisterous daring, but of silent fearlessness, of Self-denial in all its forms, no good man, in any scene or time, has ever attained to be good.

59. We have already stated the error of Burns; and mourned over it, rather than blamed it. It was the want of unity in his purposes, of consistency in his aims; the hapless attempt to mingle in friendly union the common spirit of the world with the spirit of poetry, which is of a far different and altogether irreconcilable nature. Burns was nothing wholly; and Burns could be nothing, no man formed as he was can be anything, by halves. The heart, not of a mere hot-blooded, popular Versemonger, or poetical *Restaurateur*,[1] but of a true Poet and Singer, worthy of the old religious heroic times, had been given him: and he fell in an age, not of heroism and religion, but of scepticism, selfishness, and triviality, when true Nobleness was little understood, and its place supplied by a hollow, dissocial, altogether barren and unfruitful principle of Pride. The influences of that age, his open, kind, susceptible, nature, to say nothing of his highly untoward situation, made it more than usually difficult for him to cast aside, or rightly subordinate; the better spirit that was within him ever sternly demanded its rights, its supremacy: he spent his life in endeavouring to reconcile these two; and lost it, as he must lose it, without reconciling them.

60. Burns was born poor; and born also to continue poor, for he would not endeavour to be otherwise: this it had been well could he have once for all

[1]One who keeps a restaurant. Carlyle speaks with contempt here of the so-called poet whose motive for writing is only to please the taste of the public.

admitted, and considered as finally settled. He was poor, truly; but hundreds even of his own class and order of minds have been poorer, yet have suffered nothing deadly from it: nay, his own Father had a far sorer battle with ungrateful destiny than his was; and he did not yield to it, but died courageously warring, and to all moral intents prevailing, against it. True, Burns had little means, had even little time for poetry, his only real pursuit and vocation; but so much the more precious was what little he had. In all these external respects his case was hard; but very far from the hardest. Poverty, incessant drudgery, and much worse evils, it has often been the lot of Poets and wise men to strive with, and their glory to conquer. Locke was banished as a traitor; and wrote his *Essay on the Human Understanding*, sheltering himself in a Dutch garret.[1] Was Milton rich or at his ease, when he composed *Paradise Lost*? Not only low, but fallen from a height; not only poor but impoverished; in darkness and with dangers compassed round, he sang his immortal song, and found fit audience, though few.[2] Did not Cervantes finish his work, a maimed soldier, and in prison?[3] Nay, was

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[1]John Locke (1632-1704), an English philosopher, wrote his great book, named in the text, while in exile in Holland (1682-88) on account of his supposed connection with plots against the governments of Charles II and James II.

[2]Milton composed *Paradise Lost* after the Restoration of the Stuart kings in 1660. He had been a leading supporter of Cromwell's government, and, especially because of his defense of Charles I's execution, he was for a time in actual danger under the new rule. He was also blind. The phrases, "in darkness and with dangers compassed round," and "fit audience, though few," are quoted from *Paradise Lost*, Book VII, lines 28 and 31.

[3]This is an error; Cervantes did not write *Don Quixote* in prison.

not the Araucana, which Spain acknowledges as its Epic, written without even the aid of paper; on scraps of leather, as the stout fighter and voyager snatched any moment from that wild warfare?[1]

61. And what then had these men, which Burns wanted? Two things; both which, it seems to us, are indispensable for such men. They had a true, religious principle of morals; and a single not a double aim in their activity. They were not self-seekers and self-worshippers; but seekers and worshippers of something far better than Self. Not personal enjoyment was their object; but a high, heroic idea of Religion, of Patriotism, of heavenly Wisdom in one or the other form, ever hovered before them; in which cause, they neither shrank from suffering, nor called on the earth to witness it as something wonderful; but patiently endured, counting it blessedness enough so to spend and be spent. Thus the 'golden-calf of Self-love,' however curiously carved, was not their Deity; but the Invisible Goodness, which alone is man's reasonable service.[2] This feeling was as a celestial fountain, whose streams refreshed into gladness and beauty all the provinces of their otherwise too desolate existence. In a word, they willed one thing, to which all other things were subordinated, and made subservient; and therefore they accomplished it. The wedge will rend rocks;

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[1]The *Araucana*, an epic poem about a campaign against the Araucanos of Peru, records the personal experiences of its author, Alonzo de Ercilla y Zuñiga (1533-95).

[2]The last phrase is a quotation from *Romans* XII, 1. The first part of the sentence is a reference to the story of the worship by the Israelites of the golden calf instead of the true God (*Exodus* XXXII). The golden calf stands here for any false standard of life.

but its edge must be sharp and single: if it be double, the wedge is bruised in pieces, and will rend nothing.

62. Part of this superiority these men owed to their age; in which heroism and devotedness were still practised, or at least not yet disbelieved in: but much of it likewise they owed to themselves. With Burns, again it was different. His morality, in most of its practical points, is that of a mere worldly man; enjoyment, in a finer or coarser shape, is the only thing he longs and strives for. A noble instinct sometimes raises him above this; but an instinct only, and acting only for moments. He has no Religion; in the shallow age, where his days were cast,[1] Religion was not discriminated from the New and Old Light *forms* of Religion; and was, with these, becoming obsolete in the minds of men. His heart, indeed, is alive with a trembling adoration, but there is no temple in his understanding. He lives in darkness and in the shadow of doubt. His religion, at best, is an anxious wish; like that of Rabelais, 'a great Perhaps.'

63. He loved Poetry warmly, and in his heart; could he but have loved it purely, and with his whole undivided heart, it had been well. For Poetry, as Burns could have followed it, is but another form of Wisdom, of Religion; is itself Wisdom and Religion. But this also was denied him. His poetry is a stray vagrant gleam, which will not be extinguished within him, yet rises not to be the true light of his path, but is often a wildfire that misleads him. It was not necessary for Burns to be rich, to be, or to seem 'independent:' but it *was* necessary for him to be at one with his own heart; to place what was highest in his nature, highest also in his life; 'to seek within himself for that consistency and sequence, which ex-

[1] Carlyle, as usual, over-states the case against the eighteenth century.

ternal events would for ever refuse him.' He was born a poet; poetry was the celestial element of his being, and should have been the soul of his whole endeavours. Lifted into that serene aether, whither he had wings given him to mount, he would have needed no other elevation: poverty, neglect, and all evil, save the desecration of himself and his Art, were a small matter to him; the pride and the passions of the world lay far beneath his feet; and he looked down alike on noble and slave, on prince and beggar, and all that wore the stamp of man, with clear recognition, with brotherly affection, with sympathy, with pity. Nay, we question whether for his culture as a Poet, poverty, and much suffering for a season, were not absolutely advantageous. Great men, in looking back over their lives, have testified to that effect. 'I would not for much,' says Jean Paul,[1] that I had been born richer.' And yet Paul's birth was poor enough; for, in another place, he adds: 'The prisoner's allowance is bread and water; and I had often only the latter.' But the gold that is refined in the hottest furnace comes out the purest; or, as he has himself expressed it, 'the canary-bird sings sweeter the longer it has been trained in a darkened cage.'

64. A man like Burns might have divided his hours between poetry and virtuous industry; industry which all true feeling sanctions, nay prescribes, and which has a beauty, for that cause, beyond the pomp of thrones: but to divide his hours between poetry and rich men's banquets, was an ill-starred and inauspicious attempt. How could he be at ease at such banquets? What had he to do there, mingling

[1]Jean Paul Richter, commonly called Jean Paul, a German poet and philosopher (1763-1825), whose influence on Carlyle was very great.

his music with the coarse roar of altogether earthly voices; brightening the thick smoke of intoxication with fire lent him from heaven? Was it his aim to *enjoy* life? To-morrow he must go drudge as an Exciseman! We wonder not that Burns became moody, indignant, and at times an offender against certain rules of society; but rather that he did not grow utterly frantic, and run *amuck* against them all. How could a man, so falsely placed, by his own or others' fault, ever know contentment or peaceable diligence for an hour? What he did, under such perverse guidance, and what he forbore to do, alike fill us with astonishment at the natural strength and worth of his character.

65. Doubtless there was a remedy for this perverseness: but not in others; only in himself; least of all in simple increase of wealth and worldly 'respectability.' We hope we have now heard enough about the efficacy of wealth for poetry, and to make poets happy. Nay, have we not seen another instance of it in these very days? Byron, a man of an endowment considerably less ethereal than that of Burns, is born in the rank not of a Scottish ploughman, but of an English peer: the highest worldly honours, the fairest worldly career, are his by inheritance; the richest harvest of fame he soon reaps, in another province, by his own hand. And what does all this avail him? Is he happy, is he good, is he true? Alas, he has a poet's soul, and strives towards the Infinite and the Eternal; and soon feels that all this is but mounting to the house-top to reach the stars! Like Burns, he is only a proud man; might like him have 'purchased a pocket-copy of Milton to study the character of Satan;'[4] for Satan also is By-

[4]Lockhart (p. 155) quotes from one of Burns's letters, written just after his return from Edinburgh: "I never, my

ron's grand exemplar, the hero of his poetry, and the model apparently of his conduct.[1] As in Burns's case too, the celestial element will not mingle with the clay of earth; both poet and man of the world he must not be; vulgar Ambition will not live kindly with poetic Adoration; he *cannot* serve God and Mammon.[2] Byron, like Burns, is not happy; nay, he is the most wretched of all men. His life is falsely arranged: the fire that is in him is not a strong, still, central fire, warming into beauty the products of a world; but it is the mad fire of a volcano; and now,—we look sadly into the ashes of a crater, which erelong will fill itself with snow![3]

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friend, thought mankind capable of any thing very generous; but the stateliness of the patricians of Edinburgh, and the servility of my plebeian brethren, (who, perhaps, formerly eyed me askance), since I returned home, have put me out of conceit altogether with my species. I have bought a pocket-Milton, which I carry perpetually about me, in order to study the sentiments, the dauntless magmanimity, the intrepid unyielding independence, the desperate daring, and noble defiance of hardship, in that great personage—Satan."

[1]The qualities enumerated by Burns as belonging to Milton's Satan seemed admirable to Byron as well. In addition, however, the latter thought himself like Satan in being an outcast from society and a rebel against it.

[2]Matthew VI, 24. The meaning is that one cannot serve God and at the same time devote one's life to a struggle for worldly prosperity.

[3]Carlyle means that Byron's genius, his intellectual fervor, consumed and destroyed him and became a destructive force instead of serving the world, because his life was not properly controlled by high principles. The snow in the crater probably refers to what Carlyle thought would be Byron's short-lived fame. He under-estimated the enduring qualities of Byron's poetry.

66. Byron and Burns were sent forth as missionaries to their generation, to teach it a higher Doctrine, a purer Truth: they had a message to deliver, which left them no rest till it was accomplished; in dim throes of pain, this divine behest lay smouldering within them; for they knew not what it meant, and felt it only in mysterious anticipation, and they had to die without articulately uttering it. They are in the camp of the Unconverted: yet not as high messengers of rigorous though benignant truth, but as soft flattering singers, and in pleasant fellowship, will they live there: they are first adulated, then persecuted; they accomplish little for others; they find no peace for themselves, but only death and the peace of the grave. We confess, it is not without a certain mournful awe that we view the fate of these noble souls, so richly gifted, yet ruined to so little purpose with all their gifts. It seems to us there is a stern moral taught in this piece of history,—*twice* told us in our own time! Surely to men of like genius, if there be any such, it carries with it a lesson of deep impressive significance. Surely it would become such a man, furnished for the highest of all enterprises, that of being the Poet of his Age, to consider well what it is that he attempts, and in what spirit he attempts it. For the words of Milton are true in all times, and were never truer than in this: 'He, who would write heroic poems, must make his whole life a heroic poem."[1] If he cannot first so make his life, then let him hasten from this arena; for neither its lofty glories, nor its fearful perils, are for him. Let him dwindle into a modish balladmonger; let him

[1]What Milton actually wrote was, "He who would not be frustrate of his hope to write well hereafter in laudable things ought himself to be a true poem." (*An Apology for Smectymnuus*, 1642)

worship and besing the idols of the time, and the time will not fail to reward him. If, indeed, he can endure to live in that capacity! Byron and Burns could not live as idol-priests, but the fire of their own hearts consumed them; and better it was for them that they could not. For it is not in the favour of the great or of the small, but in a life of truth, and in the inexpugnable citadel of his own soul, that a Byron's or a Burns's strength must lie. Let the great stand aloof from him, or know how to reverence him. Beautiful is the union of wealth with favour and furtherance for literature; like the costliest flower-jar enclosing the loveliest amaranth. Yet let not the relation be mistaken. A true poet is not one whom they can hire by money or flattery to be a minister of their pleasures, their writer of occasional verses, their purveyor of table-wit; he cannot be their menial, he cannot even be their partisan. At the peril of both parties, let no such union be attempted! Will a Courser of the Sun[1] work softly in the harness of a Dray-horse? His hoofs are of fire, and his path is through the heavens, bringing light to all lands: will he lumber on mud highways, dragging ale for earthly appetites, from door to door?

67. But we must stop short in these considerations, which would lead us to boundless lengths. We had something to say on the public moral character of Burns; but this also we must forbear. We are far from regarding him as guilty before the world, as guiltier than the average; nay from doubting that he is less guilty than one of ten thousand. Tried at a tribunal far more rigid than that where the *Plebiscita*[2]

[1]In Greek mythology, the chariot of the Sun-God was supposed to be drawn by semi-divine horses.

[2]Decrees, in ancient Rome, passed by the Plebs, or common citizens; now applied, chiefly on the continent of

of common civic reputations are pronounced, he has seemed to us even there less worthy of blame than of pity and wonder. But the world is habitually unjust in its judgments of such men; unjust on many grounds, of which this one may be stated as the substance: It decides, like a law, by dead statutes; and not positively but negatively, less on what is done right, than on what is or is not done wrong. Not the few inches of deflection from the mathematical orbit, which are so easily measured, but the *ratio* of these to the whole diameter, constitutes the real aberration.[1] This orbit may be a planet's, its diameter the breath of the solar system; or it may be a city hippodrome; nay the circle of ginhorse,[2] its diameter a score of feet or paces. But the inches of deflection only are measured: and it is assumed that the diameter of the ginhorse, and that of the planet, will yield

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Europe, to decisions made by appeal to the whole body of citizens. Here it seems to mean decisions by uninformed public opinion.

[1]This figure recalls the fact that Carlyle began his career as a teacher of mathematics. He refers to the method of measuring the deviation—or apparent deviation—of a planet from the perfect ellipse of its orbit. A certain number of inches of deflection will constitute a greater displacement or *aberration* when the orbit is small than when the orbit is large. In the same way the sins and failures of a man must be measured in proportion to the complexities and *diameter* of his life.

[2]A ginhorse is a horse used for working a *gin* or mill; it is driven round and round in a circle. The comparison was probably suggested to Carlyle by a letter of Burns to George Thomson, quoted by Lockhart (p. 265): "Do you think that the sober gin-horse routine of existence could inspire a man with life, and love, and joy—could fire him with enthusiasm, or melt him with pathos, equal to the genius of your book?"

the same ratio when compared with them! Here lies the root of many a blind, cruel condemnation of Burnses, Swifts, Rousseaus, which one never listens to with approval. Granted the ship comes into harbour with shrouds and tackle damaged; the pilot is blameworthy; he has not been all-wise and all-powerful: but to know *how* blameworthy, tell us first whether his voyage has been round the Globe, or only to Ramsgate and the Isle of Dogs.

68. With our readers in general, with men of right feeling anywhere, we are not required to plead for Burns. In pitying admiration, he lies enshrined in all our hearts, in a far nobler mausoleum than that one of marble; neither will his Works, even as they are, pass away from the memory of men. While the Shakspeares and Miltons roll on like mighty rivers through the country of Thought, bearing fleets of traffickers and assiduous pearl-fishers on their waves; this little Valclusa Fountain[1] will also arrest our eye: for this also is of Nature's own and most cunning workmanship, bursts from the depths of the earth, with a full gushing current, into the light of day; and often will the traveller turn aside to drink of its clear waters, and muse among its rocks and pines!

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[1]A famous spring in southern France, near Avignon, celebrated in verse by Petrarch (1304-74), an Italian poet and scholar. The contrast is not so much between Shakespeare or Milton and Petrarch as between the "mighty rivers" and the fountain in a secluded valley—Valclusa meaning "closed valley."

QUESTIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Note the topic of each paragraph. Note how the author begins and ends each paragraph. Note transition devices and connectives.

The numbers prefixed to the questions are those of the paragraphs to which they refer. Attention is called to certain words that are useful for dictionary study. Carlyle uses words very exactly, but sometimes in an unusual sense. Some of the words noted are interesting for their history or etymological significance.

The main purpose of the questions is to stimulate thought and discussion. Some may suggest theme topics.

1. How does Carlyle introduce his subject? What one of his characteristic ideas is found in this and the next paragraph? Look up *aggravation, mausoleum, posthumous.*

1-3. How does Carlyle arrange the first three paragraphs so as to connect them closely?

3. Look up *gauging.*

4. Look up *multifarious, nervous* in a complimentary sense.

1-5. What main topic is discussed in these paragraphs?

3. Carlyle criticizes Dr. Currie for "the apologetic air" which he adopts towards Burns. Is there not some apology in Carlyle's later treatment of Burns's works?

5. Give in your own words Carlyle's idea of what ought to be in a Biography. What men do you know of who would deserve such a study? Have any such studies been made of them?

6-9. What main topic is discussed in these paragraphs?

6. Look up *arsenal, magazine.* Why are modern magazines so called?

7. Find a very elaborate and beautiful figure of speech in this paragraph. Explain its meaning.

8. Why are poets more valuable to the world than conquerors?

9. Where does Carlyle return to the idea of Burns's sympathy with Nature? Why does he discuss it in two separate places? What differences are there in the purpose and the method of the two discussions?

Is there any inconsistency between the conclusion of this paragraph and what Carlyle says in paragraphs 48 and 56?

Look up *supercilious;* compare with *highbrow.*

10. What is meant by saying that Burns's poems were "mere occasional effusions?" Find some of them in this book that illustrate the point. Find in paragraph 11 a statement which implies that such poems are likely to be the best. Look up *wanted* (original sense).

12. What contrast does Carlyle draw here between Burns and Byron? What resemblances between the two does he note in paragraphs 66 and 67? Find out something about the life and the poetry of Byron, and see whether Carlyle is accurate in what he says about him.

13. What digression occurs in the paragraph? How does Carlyle show that he regards it as a digression? Why does he discuss the topic at all?

14. What, according to Carlyle, is the proper subject-matter for poetry? Find in Burns's poems some examples of this kind of subject-matter. Can you give some examples of poems that deal with the kind of subject-matter disapproved by Carlyle and that you think are really good? Defend them.

15. What does Carlyle mean by calling the poet "a *vates,* a seer"? (See paragraph 17.))

16. What does the phrase, "seeing the world," usually mean? What does Carlyle mean by it? Look up *inscrutable.*

17. Look up *instinct.*

18. In this paragraph Carlyle discusses those qualities of Burns's poetry which illustrate the "return to nature" characterizing the romantic movement of the late eighteenth century? What are these qualities? Which one does he give examples of in the next paragraph?

20. Find in *Robinson Crusoe* a description that is "detailed, ample, and lovingly exact." Look up *garrulity, laconic pith.*

21. Read Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn," and study it to get its central idea. The poem proves that Keats as well as Burns had vigorous "intellectual perceptions." Look up *predilection.*

22. What "far subtler things than the doctrine of association" are illustrated by the quotation from Burns's letter?

23. What part of this paragraph is on human life in general rather than on Burns? What reason is there for introducing these general remarks?

24. What is the point of this paragraph and the preceding quotation? Read Matthew Arnold's poem on "St. Brandan" for a parallel idea.

25 and 26. When is Indignation a good thing? Find some of the right kind of Indignation in Burns's poems.

29. Look up *caricature.*

30. What shows that at the beginning of this paragraph the author changes the subject? What has he been discussing in paragraphs 10-29? Look up *evanescent, genial* (unusual sense).

30-34. What is discussed in these paragraphs? Divide this discussion into two parts.

31. What does Carlyle mean by "the next day as the last," etc., to the end of the sentence?

32. If Carlyle were alive now, what would he think of our present-day popular songs? Compare some of them with Burns's songs and with Shakespeare's. Look up the origin of *tawdry*.

33. Read some of Shakespeare's songs; for example, those in the *Golden Treasury*.

35. What subject is introduced in this paragraph? How is it led up to in the preceding paragraph?

35. Read Gray's "Elegy in a Country Churchyard," and prove that it really does have a "local environment," and was "nourished by the affections which spring from a native soil." Note especially that the fifteenth stanza originally contained the names of Cato, Tully, and Caesar, which were changed by the author to what? why?

36. Study carefully the sentences beginning, "We hope there is a prejudice," and the next one. What is meant by founding patriotism on prejudice? What ought it to be founded on? How can we love and "prize justly" other lands? Discuss specifically with reference to France, Germany, England, Italy, Japan, etc. What is meant by "the venerable structure of social and moral Life," etc.? Discuss by specific examples. What is meant by the briers and the roses that may grow up from "the roots . . . . in the very core of man's being"? Look up *indigenous*.

37. Give some examples of American literature that have "the true racy virtues of the soil and climate." What poet has been called "the American Burns"? Why? Do you think the comparison is a good one?

38. This is a very long transition paragraph.

What main topic is dismissed here, and what one is introduced? How much space is devoted to each in the Essay?

Look up *intercalated.*

39. What characteristics of youth did Burns retain throughout life? What fundamental ideas of Carlyle's philosophy are introduced into this paragraph?

Look up *cornucopia.*

40. Find the main idea of this paragraph discussed again in paragraph 67. Why does Carlyle put it in twice and at these two places?

41. Note the emotion which Carlyle puts into this paragraph and its personal application to himself. Read, if possible, the first section, called "James Carlyle," in *Carlyle's Reminiscences,* giving Carlyle's own picture of his father.

Look up *bates.*

42. What does Carlyle think about youthful dissipation? Discuss in detail what is meant by the sentence about Manhood and Necessity.

Look up *aberration.*

43. Discuss from this paragraph Carlyle's idea of the proper attitude toward religion. What is meant by the sentence beginning "For now"?

44. What topic is introduced in this paragraph? Where does it end? Why is the long quotation from Scott inserted in this section? What resemblance was there between Burns and Napoleon?

45. What do we learn about Burns from Sir Walter Scott's reminiscences? What do we learn about Scott himself?

Look up *clownish.*

46. Why did Burns's visit to Edinburgh do him "great and lasting injury"?

Look up *altercation.*

48. What main topic begins in this paragraph? We may regard this topic as concluded with paragraph 52 or as continuing to the break before paragraph 55. Discuss.

50. How did the so-called "patrons of genius" harm Burns? Could they have helped him? (See paragraphs 55 and 56).

Look up *assiduous* (literal meaning).

51. "His life has now lost its unity." What unity ought it to have had?

52. What does this paragraph reveal about Carlyle's nature?

53. Explain the sentence beginning "Not as a hired soldier."

54. In what possible sense could madness be looked upon as a "gate of deliverance"? Note the beauty of sound and sense in the last sentence.

55. What is the main topic of the rest of the Essay? Divide into three sections.

Why is Patronage "twice cursed"? Why is Pride "inculcated and encouraged as the basis of our whole social morality"?

Look up *inculcate.*

56. How does the sentence beginning "Do men gather grapes" apply here?

How can we "go and *do otherwise*"? Be specific.

57. How has the world generally received its great men? Why? What is the function of great men in the world? For further examples see the lives of Columbus, S. F. B. Morse, Galvani, Lavoisier, Lincoln, etc. It is worth while to illustrate in some detail the notion that "The world receives a new idea with positive pain." (Walter Bagehot) Good subjects for themes and oral compositions.

58-61. These paragraphs contain some of Carlyle's most fundamental ideas. What are they?

61. Why did Burns fail, while Locke, Milton, and Cervantes succeeded? Note the succession of figures of speech in this paragraph. What do they mean?

62. What is the morality "of a mere worldly man"? What sort of "noble instinct" could raise one above it? What is meant by saying that "there is no temple in his understanding"?

63. How can Poetry be Wisdom and Religion? Is all poetry such, even all true poetry? How about Shakespeare's songs? Explain the meaning in detail of the last sentence.

65. Carlyle exaggerates Byron's advantages in order to contrast him with Burns. What handicaps did Byron suffer from? Which of the two poets had the better parents?

66. What, according to this paragraph, is the true function of a poet? Note the succession of figures of speech. Explain in detail the figure in the last two sentences, and show how it applies to Burns.

Look up *inexpugnable*.

67. What do you think of the idea that a man of genius should be judged more leniently than other men?

68. Note the beauty and elaborate consistency of the concluding figure of speech. What is meant by saying that "the Shakspeares and Miltons" bear "fleets of traffickers and assiduous pearl-fishers on their waves"?

For general questions on the Essay see the last part of the introduction. If the class has studied Edgar Allan Poe, an interesting comparison might be made between him and Burns as to details of their lives, their treatment by the public, and their posthumous fame.

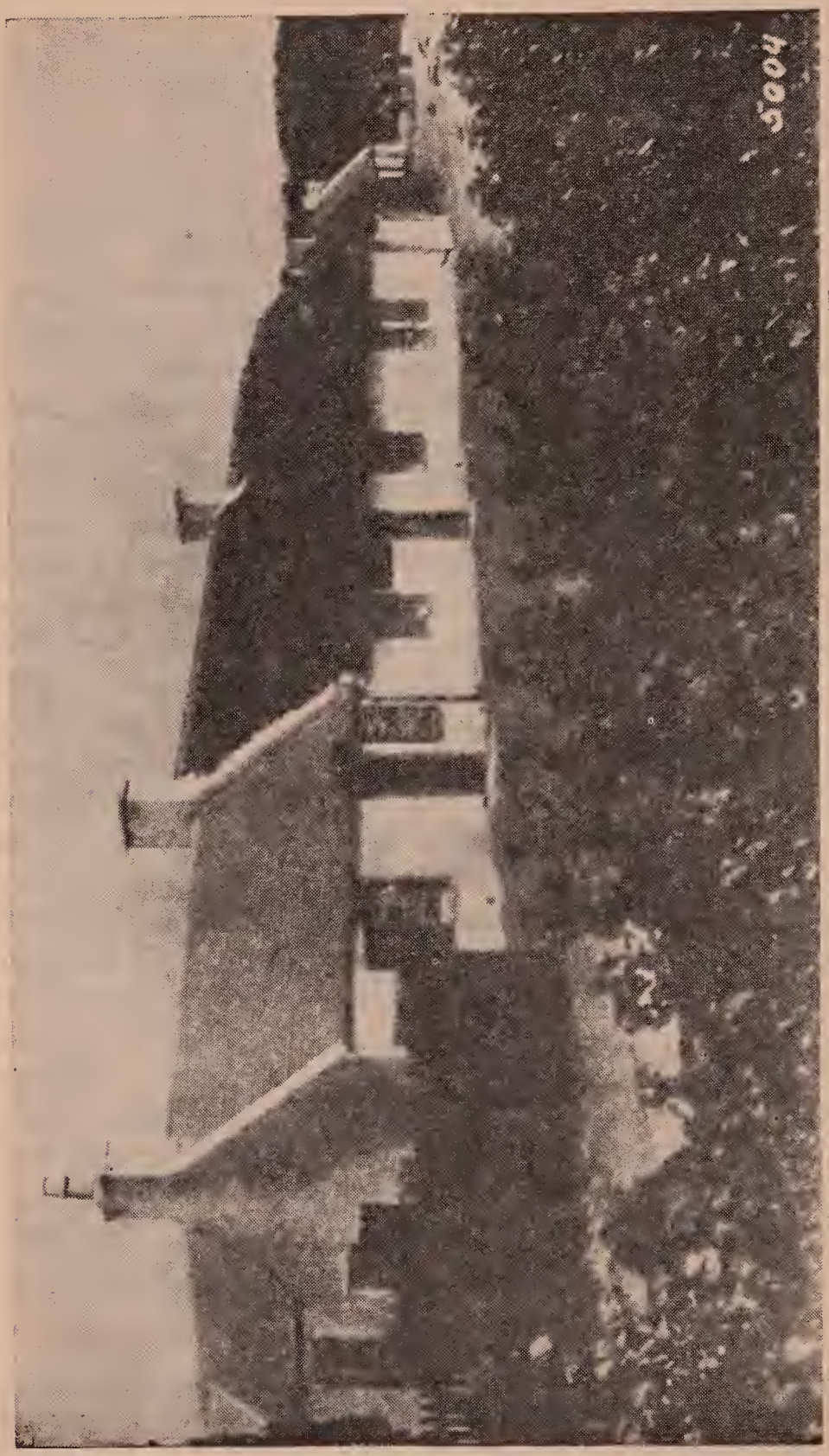
Selections from the Poetry of Robert Burns

SUGGESTIONS TO TEACHERS

For the Study of the Poetry of Burns

Burns's poetry is eminently suitable in subject-matter and style to pupils of high school age. Difficulties of language should be minimized as far as possible. The class discussion should never degenerate into a questioning on the meanings of words. Where the peculiar form is merely spelled differently from the standard form or abbreviated from it, the pupil should be expected to understand it. (See notes at beginning of Glossary.) Pronounce according to requirements of rhyme and rhythm; otherwise read like ordinary English. Genuine "sing-song" reading of the songs should be encouraged. If possible, the class should actually sing or hear sung *Sweet Afton, Ye Flowery Banks,* or some of the other songs, like *Auld Lang Syne.* There is another, less poetic, but more popular version of *Ye Flowery Banks,* beginning "Ye banks and braes o' bonnie Doon," which is more commonly found set to music. Vol. IV of the *Centenary Edition* of Burns, edited by Henley and Henderson, contains a considerable number of Burns's songs with the music. They can also be found in numerous song collections. Several of them are available in phonograph records by good singers. Victor Records include the following: 64105 *Auld Lang Syne;* 64427 *Bonnie Wee Thing;* 87005 *Comin' Through the Rye* (Farrar); 64422 Same (Gluck); 45132 *Sweet Afton;* 17366 *John Anderson, My Jo;* 54321 *Red, Red Rose;* 16062 *Scots, Wha Hae;* 87062 *Ye Banks and Braes o' Bonnie Doon.*

(The prints of the Burns and Carlyle cottages reproduced in this book may be purchased from the Thompson Publishing Company, Syracuse, New York. Blue prints are two cents each: 4 by 5 black and white prints, fifteen cents each; 8 by 10 black and white prints, fifty cents each, postage extra.)



BIRTHPLACE OF ROBERT BURRNS, ALLOWAY

(From a Thompson Print)

THE COTTER'S SATURDAY NIGHT

Inscribed to R. Aiken, Esq.

Let not Ambition mock their useful toil,
Their homely joys, and destiny obscure;
Nor Grandeur hear. with a disdainful smile,
The short and simple annals of the poor.
—GRAY

I.

My lov'd, my honor'd, much respected friend!
No mercenary bard his homage pays;
With honest pride, I scorn each selfish end,
My deerest meed, a friend's esteem and praise:
To you I sing, in simple Scottish lays,
The lowly train in life's sequester'd scene;
The native feelings strong, the guileless ways;
What Aiken in a cottage would have been;
Ah! tho' his worth unknown, far happier there I ween!

II.

November chill blaws loud wi' angry sugh;
The short'ning winter-day is near a close;
The miry beasts retreating frae the pleugh;
The black'ning trains o' craws to their repose:
The toil-worn Cotter frae his labor goes—
This night his weekly moil is at an end,
Collects his spades, his mattocks, and his hoes,
Hoping the morn in ease and rest to spend,
And weary, o'er the moor, his course does hameward bend.

III.

At length his lonely cot appears in view,
Beneath the shelter of an aged tree;

Th' expectant wee-things, toddlin', stacher through
To meet their dad, wi' flichterin' noise and glee.
His wee bit ingle, blinkin bonilie,
His clean hearth-stane, his thrifty wifie's smile,
The lisping infant, prattling on his knee,
Does a' his weary kiaugh and care beguile,
And makes him quite forget his labor and his toil.

IV.

Belyve, the elder bairns come drapping in,
At service out, amang the farmers roun';
Some ca' the pleugh, some herd, some tentie rin
A cannie errand to a neebor town:
Their eldest hope, their Jenny, woman grown,
In youthfu' bloom, love sparkling in her e'e,
Comes hame; perhaps, to shew a braw new gown,
Or deposite her sair-won penny-free,
To help her parents dear, if they in hardship be.

V.

With joy unfeign'd, brothers and sisters meet,
And each for other's weelfare kindly spiers:
The social hours, swift-wing'd, unnotic'd fleet;
Each tells the uncos that he sees or hears.
The parents partial eye their hopeful years;
Anticipation forward points the view;
The mother, wi' her needle and her sheers,
Gars auld claes look amaist as weel's the new;
The father mixes a' wi' admonition due.

VI.

Their master's and their mistress's command
The younkers a' are warned to obey;
And mind their labours wi' an eydent hand,
And ne'er, tho' out o' sight, to jauk or play:
'And O! be sure to fear the Lord alway,
And mind your duty, duly, morn and night;
Lest in temptation's path ye gang astray,

Implore His counsel and assisting might:
They never sought in vain that sought the Lord aright.'

VII.

But hark! a rap comes gently to the door;
Jenny, wha kens the meaning o' the same,
Tells how a neebor lad came o'er the moor,
To do some errands, and convoy her hame.
The wily mother sees the conscious flame
Sparkle in Jenny's e'e, and flush her cheek;
With heart-struck anxious care, enquires his name.
While Jenny hafflins is afraid to speak;
Weel-pleas'd the mother hears, it's nae wild, worthless rake.

VIII.

With kindly welcome, Jenny brings him ben;
A strappin' youth, he takes the mother's eye;
Blythe Jenny sees the visit's no ill taen;
The father cracks of horses, pleughs, and kye.
The youngster's artless heart o'erflows wi' joy,
But blate and laithfu', scarce can weel behave;
The mother, wi' a woman's wiles, can spy
What makes the youth sae bashfu' and sae grave;
Weel-pleas'd to think her bairn's respected like the lave.

IX.

O happy love! where love like this is found:
O heart-felt raptures! bliss beyond compare!
I've pacèd much this weary, mortal round,
And sage experience bids me this declare:—
'If Heaven a draught of heavenly pleasure spare,
One cordial in this melancholy vale,
'Tis when a youthful, loving, modest pair,
In other's arms, breathe out the tender tale

Beneath the milk-white thorn that scents the ev'ning gale.'

X.

Is there, in human form, that bears a heart,
A wretch! a villain! lost to love and truth!
That can, with studied, sly, ensnaring art,
Betray sweet Jenny's unsuspecting youth?
Curse on his perjur'd arts! dissembling, smooth!
Are honour, virtue, conscience, all exil'd?
Is there no pity, no relenting ruth,
Points to the parents fondling o'er their child?
Then paints the ruin'd maid, and their distraction wild?

XI.

But now the supper crowns their simple board,
The healsome parritch, chief o' Scotia's food;
The soupe their only hawkie does afford,
That, 'yont the hallan snugly chows her cood;
The dame brings forth, in complimental mood,
To grace the lad, her weel-hain'd kebbuck, fell;
And aft he's prest, and aft he ca's it guid;
The frugal wifie, garrulous, will tell,
How 'twas a towmond auld, sin' lint was i' the bell.

XII.

The chearfu' supper done, wi' serious face,
They, round the ingle, form a circle wide;
The sire turns o'er, wi' patriarchal grace,
The big ha'-Bible, ance his father's pride.
His bonnet rev'rently is laid aside,
His lyart haffets wearing thin and bare;
Those strains that once did sweet in Zion glide,
He wales a portion with judicious care,
And 'Let us worship God!' he says, with solemn air.

XIII.

They chant their artless notes in simple guise,
They tune their hearts, by far the noblest aim;
Perhaps *Dundee's* wild-warbling measures rise,
Or plaintive *Martyrs*, worthy of the name;
Or noble *Elgin* beets the heaven-ward flame,
The sweetest far of Scotia's holy lays:
Compar'd with these, Italian trills are tame;
The tickl'd ears no heart-felt raptures raise;
Nae unison hae they, with our Creator's praise.[1]

XIV.

The priest-like father reads the sacred page.
How Abram was the friend of God on high:
Or, Moses bade eternal warfare wage
With Amalek's ungracious progeny;
Or, how the royal Bard did groaning lie
Beneath the stroke of Heaven's avenging ire;[2]
Or Job's pathetic plaint, and wailing cry;
Or rapt Isaiah's wild, seraphic fire;
Or other holy Seers that tune the sacred lyre.

XV.

Perhaps the Christian volume is the theme:
How guiltless blood for guilty man was shed;
How He, who bore in Heaven the second name,
Had not on earth whereon to lay His head;
How His first followers and servants sped;
The precepts sage they wrote to many a land:
How he, who lone in Patmos banished,
Saw in the sun a mighty angel stand,
And heard great Bab'lon's doom pronounc'd by Heaven's command.[3]

---

[1]The proper names in this stanza are those of hymn-tunes.

[2]David, who was both king and poet, was punished for his sins.

XVI.

Then kneeling down to Heaven's Eternal King,
The saint, the father, and the husband prays:
Hope 'springs exulting on triumphant wing,'[1]
That thus they all shall meet in future days,
There, ever bask in uncreated rays,
No more to sigh or shed the bitter tear,
Together hymning their Creator's praise,
In such society, yet still more dear;
While circling Time moves round in an eternal sphere.

XVII.

Compar'd with this, how poor Religion's pride,
In all the pomp of method, and of art;
When men display to congregations wide
Devotion's ev'ry grace, except the heart
The Power, incens'd, the pageant will desert,
The pompous strain, the sacerdotal stole:
But haply, in some cottage far apart,
May hear, well-pleas'd, the language of the soul,
And in His Book of Life the inmates poor enroll.

XVIII.

Then homeward all take off their sev'ral way;
The youngling cottagers retire to rest:
The parent-pair their secret homage pay,
And proffer up to Heaven the warm request,
That He who stills the raven's clam'rous nest,
And decks the lily fair in flow'ry pride,
Would, in the way His wisdom sees the best,
For them and for their little ones provide;
But, chiefly, in their hearts with Grace Divine preside.

---

[1]Refers to the *Apocalypse* or *Revelation* of St. John, the last book in the Bible.

[2]Burns made a note that he took this from Pope's *Windsor Forest*. It is there applied to the flight of a pheasant.

XIX.

From scenes like these, old Scotia's grandeur springs,
That makes her lov'd at home, rever'd abroad:
Princes and lords are but the breath of kings,
'An honest man's the noblest work of God';[1]
And certes, in fair Virtue's heavenly road,
The cottage leaves the palace far behind;
What is a lordling's pomp? a cumbrous load,
Disguising oft the wretch of human kind,
Studied in arts of Hell, in wickedness refin'd!

XX.

O Scotia! my dear, my native soil!
For whom my warmest wish to Heaven is sent!
Long may thy hardy sons of rustic toil
Be blest with health, and peace, and sweet content!
And O! may Heaven their simple lives prevent
From Luxury's contagion, weak and vile!
Then, howe'er crowns and coronets be rent,
A virtuous populace may rise the while,
And stand a wall of fire around their much-lov'd Isle.

XXI.

O Thou! who pour'd the patriotic tide,
That stream'd thro' Wallace's undaunted heart,
Who dar'd to, nobly, stem tyrannic pride,
Or nobly die, the second glorious part:
(The patriot's God, peculiarly Thou art,
His friend, inspirer, guardian, and reward!)
O never, never Scotia's realm desert;
But still the patriot, and the patriot-bard
In bright succession raise, her ornament and guard!

[1]From Pope's *Essay on Man*, IV, 247.

TAM O' SHANTER

A Tale

Of Brownyis and of Bogillis full is this Buke.

—GAWIN DOUGLAS

When chapman billies leave the street,
And drouthy neebors neebors meet;
As market-days are wearing late,
An' folk begin to tak the gate;
While we sit bousing at the nappy,
An' getting fou and unco happy,
We think na on the lang Scots miles,
The mosses, waters, slaps, and styles,
That lie between us and our hame,
Whare sits our sulky, sullen dame,
Gathering her brows like gathering storm,
Nursing her wrath to keep it warm.

This truth fand honest Tam o'Shanter,[1]
As he frae Ayr ae night did canter:
(Auld Ayr, wham ne'er a town surpasses,
For honest men and bonie lasses).

[1]The following note is from the *Centenary Edition* of Burns, I, 437: "Probably Burns drew the suggestion of his hero, Tam o' Shanter, from the character and adventures of Douglas Graham. . . son of Robert Graham, farmer at Douglastown, tenant of the farm of Shanter on the Carrick Shore, and owner of a boat which he had named *Tam o' Shanter*. Graham was noted for his convivial habits, which his wife's ratings tended rather to confirm than to eradicate. Tradition relates that once, when his long-tailed grey mare had waited even longer than usual for her master at the tavern door, certain humourists plucked her tail to such an extent as to leave it little better than a stump, and that Graham, on his attention being called to its state next morning, swore that it had been depilated by the witches at Alloway Kirk."

O Tam, had'st thou but been sae wise,
As taen thy ain wife Kate's advice!
She tauld thee weel thou was a skellum,
A blethering, blustering, drunken blellum;
That frae November till October,
Ae market-day thou was nae sober;
That ilka melder wi' the miller,
Thou sat as lang as thou had siller;
That ev'ry naig was ca'd a shoe on,
The smith and thee gat roaring fou on;
That at the Lord's house, even on Sunday,
Thou drank wi' Kirkton Jean till Monday.
She prophesied, that, late or soon,
Thou would be found deep drown'd in Doon,
Or catch'd wi' warlocks in the mirk
By Alloway's auld, haunted kirk.[1]
Ah! gentle dames, it gars me greet,
To think how monie counsels sweet,
How monie lengthen'd, sage advices
The husband frae the wife despises!

But to our tale:—Ae market-night,
Tam had got planted unco right,
Fast by an ingle, bleezing finely,
Wi' reaming swats, that drank divinely;
And at his elbow, Souter Johnie,
His ancient, trusty, drouthy cronie:
Tam lo'ed him like a very brither;
They had been fou for weeks thegither.
The night drave on wi' sangs and clatter:
And ay the ale was growing better:
The landlady and Tam grew gracious
Wi' secret favours, sweet and precious:

[1]The ruined church of Alloway and the bridge over the Doon referred to in the latter part of the poem are both very near Burns's birthplace.

The Souter tauld his queerest stories;
The landlord's laugh was ready chorus:
The storm without might rair and rustle,
Tam did na mind the storm a whistle.

Care, mad to see a man sae happy,
E'en drown'd himself amang the nappy.
As bees flee hame wi' lades o' treasure,
The minutes wing'd their way wi' pleasure:
Kings may be blest but Tam was glorious,
O'er a' the ills o' life victorious!

But pleasures are like poppies spread:
You seize the flow'r, its bloom is shed;
Or like the snow falls in the river,
A moment white—then melts for ever;
Or like the borealis race,
That flit ere you can point their place;
Or like the rainbow's lovely form
Evanishing amid the storm.
Nae man can tether time or tide;
The hour approaches Tam maun ride:
That hour, o' night's black arch the key-stane,
That dreary hour Tam mounts his beast in;
And sic a night he taks the road in,
As ne'er poor sinner was abroad in.
The wind blew as 'twad blawn its last;
The rattling showers rose on the blast;
The speedy gleams the darkness swallow'd;
Loud, deep, and lang the thunder bellow'd:
That night a child might understand,
The Deil had business on his hand.

Weel mounted on his gray mare Meg,
A better never lifted leg,
Tam skelpit on thro' dub and mire,

Despising wind, and rain, and fire;
Whiles holding fast his guid blue bonnet,
Whiles crooning o'er some auld Scots sonnet,
Whiles glow'ring round wi' prudent cares,
Lest bogles catch him unawares:
Kirk-Alloway was drawing nigh,
Whare ghaists and houlets nightly cry.

By this time he was cross the ford,
Whare in the snaw the chapman smoor'd;
And past the birks and meikle stane,
Whare drunken Charlie brak's neck-bane;
And thro' the whins, and by the cairn,
Whare hunters fand the murder'd bairn;
And near the thorn, aboon the well,
Whare Mungo's mither hang'd hersel.
Before him Doon pours all his floods;
The doubling storm roars thro' the woods;
The lightnings flash from pole to pole;
Near and more near the thunders roll:
When, glimmering thro' the groaning trees,
Kirk-Alloway seem'd in a bleeze,
Thro' ilka bore the beams were glancing,
And loud resounded mirth and dancing.

Inspiring bold John Barleycorn,
What dangers thou canst make us scorn!
Wi' tippenny, we fear nae evil;
Wi' usquabae, we'll face the Devil!
The swats sae ream'd in Tammie's noddle,
Fair play, he car'd na deils a boddle.
But Maggie stood, right sair astonish'd,
Till, by the heel and hand admonish'd,
She ventur'd forward on the light;
And, vow! Tam saw an unco sight!

Warlocks and witches in a dance:
Nae cotillion, brent new frae France,
But hornpipes, jigs, strathspeys, and reels,
Put life and mettle in their heels.
A winnock-bunker in the east,
There sat Auld Nick, in shape o' beast;
A tousie tyke, black, grim, and large,
To gie them music was his charge:
He screw'd the pipes and gart them skirl,
Till roof and rafters a' did dirl.
Coffins stood round, like open presses,
That shaw'd the dead in their last dresses;
And, by some devilish cantraip sleight,
Each in its cauld hand held a light:
By which heroic Tam was able
To note upon the haly table,
A murderer's banes, in gibbet-airns;
Twa span-lang, wee, unchristen'd bairns;
A thief new-cutted frae a rape—
Wi' his last gasp his gab did gape;
Five tomahawks wi' bluid red-rusted;
Five scymitars wi' murder crusted;
A garter which a babe had strangled;
A knife a father's throat had mangled—
Whom his ain son o' life bereft—
The grey-hairs yet stack to the heft;
Wi' mair of horrible and awefu'
Which even to name wad be unlawfu'.

As Tammie glowr'd, amaz'd, and curious,
The mirth and fun grew fast and furious;
The piper loud and louder blew,
The dancers quick and quicker flew,
They reel'd, they set, they cross'd, they cleekit,
Till ilka carlin swat and reekit,
And coost her duddies to the wark,
And linket at it in her sark!

Now, Tam, O Tam! had thae been queans,
A' plump and strapping in their teens!
Their sarks, instead o' creeshie flannen,
Been snaw-white seventeen hunder linen!—[1]
Thir breeks o' mine, my only pair,
That ance were plush, o' guid blue hair,
I wad hae gi'en them off my hurdies
For ae blink o' the bonie burdies!

But wither'd beldams, auld and droll,
Rigwoodie hags wad spean a foal,
Louping and flinging on a crummock,
I wonder did na turn thy stomach!
But Tam kend what was what fu' brawlie:
There was ae winsome wench and wawlie,
That night enlisted in the core,
Lang after kend on Carrick shore
(For monie a beast to dead she shot,
An' perish'd monie a bonie boat,
And shook baith meikle corn and bear,
And kept the country-side in fear).
Her cutty sark, o' Paisley harn,
That while a lassie she had worn,
In longitude tho' sorely scanty,
It was her best, and she was vauntie . . .[1]
Ah! little kend thy reverend grannie,
That sark she coft for her wee Nannie,
Wi' twa pund Scots ('twas a' her riches),
Wad ever grac'd a dance of witches!

But here my Muse her wing maun cour,
Sic flights are far beyond her power:
To sing how Nannie lap and flang
(A souple jade she was and strang),
And how Tam stood like ane bewitch'd,

[1]Very fine linen with 1700 threads to a breadth.

And thought his very een enriched;
Even Satan glowr'd, and fidg'd fu' fain,
And hotch'd and blew wi' might and main;
Till first ae caper, syne anither,
Tam tint his reason a' theigither,
And roars out: 'Weel done, Cutty-sark!'
And in an instant all was dark;
And scarcely had he Maggie rallied,
When out the hellish legion sallied.

As bees bizz out wi' anggry fyke,
When plundering herds assail their byke;
As open pussie's mortal foes,
When, pop! she starts before their nose;
As eager runs the market-crowd,
When 'Catch the thief!' resounds aloud:
So Maggie runs, the witches follow,
Wi' monie an eldritch skriech and hollo.

Ah, Tam! Ah, Tam! thou'll get thy fairin![2]
In hell theyl'l roast thee like a herrin!
In vain thy Kate awaits thy comin!
Kate soon will be a woefu' woman!
Now, do thy speedy utmost, Meg,
And win the key-stane of the brig;
There, at them thou thy tail may toss,

---

[1]The dots do not indicate an omission, but are in the original.

[2]Note from the *Centenary Edition* of Burns: "Literally a present from a fair. It was long a custom of peasants returning from the fair to throw bags of confectionery to children. This was the children's 'fairin.' But the word came to be used, as here, sarcastically, to signify a beating."

A running stream they dare na cross!"[1]
But ere the key-stane she could make,
The fient a tail she had to shake;
For Nannie, far before the rest,
Hard upon noble Maggie prest,
And flew at Tam wi' furious ettle;
But little wist she Maggie's mettle!
Ae spring brought off her master hale,
But left behind her ain grey tail:
The carlin claught her by the rump,
And left poor Maggie scarce a stump.

Now, wha this tale o' truth shall read,
Ilk man, and mother's son, take heed:
Whene'er to drink you are inclin'd,
Or cutty sarks run in your mind,
Think! ye may buy the joys o'er dear:
Remember Tam o' Shanter's mare.

---

[1]In the edition of 1793 and 1794, Burns inserted this note: "It is a well-known fact that witches, or any evil spirits, have no power to follow a poor wight any farther than the middle of the next running stream. It may be proper likewise to mention to the benighted traveller, that when he falls in with *bogles*, whatever danger may be in his going forward, there is much more hazard in turning back."

TO A MOUSE

ON TURNING HER UP IN HER NEST WITH THE PLOUGH, NOVEMBER 1785

I.

Wee, sleekit, cowrin, tim'rous beastie,
O, what a panic's in thy breastie!
Thou need na start awa sae hasty
Wi' bickering brattle!
I wad be laith to rin an' chase thee,
Wi' murdering pattle!

II.

I'm truly sorry man's dominion
Has broken Nature's social union,
An' justifies that ill opinion
Which makes thee startle
At me, thy poor, earth-born companion
An' fellow mortal!

III.

I doubt na, whyles, but thou may thieve;
What then? poor beastie, thou maun live!
A daimen icker in a thrave
'S a sma' request;
I'll get a blessin wi' the lave,
An' never miss 't!

IV.

Thy wee-bit housie, too, in ruin!
Its silly wa's the win's are strewin!
An' naething, now, to big a new ane,
O' foggage green!
An' bleak December's win's ensuin,
Baith snell an' keen!

V.

Thou saw the fields laid bare an' waste,
An' weary winter comin fast,
An' cozie here, beneath the blast,
Thou thought to dwell,
Till crash! the cruel coulter past
Out thro' thy cell.

VI.

That wee bit heap o' leaves an' stibble,
Has cost thee monie a weary nibble!
Now thou's turned out, for a' thy trouble,
But house or hald,
To thole the winter's sleety dribble,
An' cranreuch cauld!

VII.

But Mousie, thou art no thy lane,
In proving foresight may be vain:
The best-laid schemes o' mice an' men
Gang aft agley,
An' lea'e us nought but grief an' pain,
For promis'd joy!

VIII.

Still thou art blest, compared wi' me!
The present only touches thee:
But och! I backward cast my e'e,
On prospects drear!
An' forward, tho' I canna see,
I guess an' fear!

TO A MOUNTAIN DAISY

ON TURNING ONE DOWN WITH THE PLOUGH IN APRIL 1786

I.

Wee, modest, crimson-tippéd flow'r,
Thou's met me in an evil hour;
For I maun crush amang the stoure
Thy slender stem:
To spare thee now is past my pow'r,
Thou bonie gem.

II.

Alas! it's no thy neebor sweet,
The bonie lark, companion meet,
Bending thee 'mang the dewy weet,
Wi' spreckled breast!
When upward-springing, blythe, to greet
The purpling east.

III.

Cauld blew the bitter-biting north
Upon thy early, humble birth:
Yet cheerfully thou glinted forth
Amid the storm,
Scarce rear'd above the parent-earth
Thy tender form.

IV.

The flaunting flow'rs our gardens yield,
High shelt'ring woods and wa's maun shield:
But thou, beneath the random bield
O' clod or stane,
Adorns the histie stibble-field.
Unseen, alane.

V.

There, in thy scanty mantle clad,
Thy snawie bosom sun-ward spread,
Thou lifts thy unassuming head
In humble guise;
But now the share uptears thy bed,
And low thou lies!

VI.

Such is the fate of artless maid,
Sweet flow'ret of the rural shade!
By love's simplicity betray'd,
And guileless trust;
Till she, like thee, all soil'd, is laid
Low i' the dust.

VII.

Such is the fate of simple Bard,
On Life's rough ocean luckless starr'd!
Unskilful he to note the card
Of prudent lore,
Till billows rage, and gales blow hard,
And whelm him o'er!

VIII.

Such fate to suffering Worth is giv'n,
Who long with wants and woes has striv'n,
By human pride or cunning driv'n
To mis'ry's brink;
Till, wrench'd of ev'ry stay but Heav'n,
He, ruin'd, sink!

IX.

Ev'n thou who mourn'st the Daisy's fate,
That fate is thine—no distant date;
Stern Ruin's plough-share drives elate,
Full on thy bloom,
Till crush'd beneath the furrow's weight
Shall be thy doom!

POOR MAILIE'S ELEGY[1]

I.

Lament in rhyme, lament in prose,
Wi' saut tears tricklin down your nose;
Our Bardie's fate is at a close,
Past a' remead!
The last, sad cape-stane of his woes;
Poor Mailie's dead!

II.

It's no the loss of warl's gear,
That could sae bitter draw the tear,
Or mak our Bardie, dowie, wear
The mourning weed:
He's lost a friend an' neebor dear
In Mailie dead.

III.

Thro' a' the toun she trotted by him;
A lang half-mile she could descry him,
Wi' kindly bleat, when she did spy him,
She ran wi' speed:
A friend mair faithfu' ne'er cam nigh him,
Than Mailie dead.

IV.

I wat she was a sheep o' sense,
An' could behave hersel wi' mense:
I'll say 't, she never brak a fence,
Thro' thievish greed.
Our Bardie, lanely, keeps the spence
Sin' Mailie's dead.

---

[1] "Poor Mailie," the poet's ewe, did not die at this time, but was rescued from the ditch into which she had fallen as a result of becoming entangled with a rope; the elegy is purely imaginative. In the refrain of the poem pronounce *dead* to rhyme with weed.

V.

Or, if he wanders up the howe,
Her livin image in her yowe
Comes bleatin till him, owre the knowe,
For bits o' bread;
An' down the briny pearls rowe
For Mailie dead.

VI.

She was nae get o' moorlan tips,
Wi' tawted ket, an' hairy hips;
For her forbears were brought in ships,
Frae 'yont the Tweed:
A bonier fleesh ne'er cross'd the clips
Than Mailie's dead.

VII.

Wae worth the man wha first did shape
That vile, wanchancie thing—a rape!
It maks guid fellows girn and gape,
Wi' chokin dread;
An' Robin's bonnet wave wi' crape
For Mailie dead.

VIII.

O a' ye bards on bonie Doon!
An' wha on Ayr your chanters tune!
Come, join the melancholious croon
O' Robin's reed!
His heart will never get aboon!
His Mailie's dead!

YE FLOWERY BANKS

I.

Ye flowery banks o' bonie Doon,
How can ye blume sae fair?
How can ye chant, ye little birds,
And I sae fu' o' care?

II.

Thou'll break my heart, thou bonie bird,
That sings upon the bough:
Thou minds me o' the happy days
When my fause Luve was true!

III.

Thou'll break my heart, thou bonie bird,
That sings beside thy mate:
For sae I sat, and sae I sang,
And wist na o' my fate!

IV.

Aft hae I rov'd by bonie Doon
To see the woodbine twine,
And ilka bird sang o' its luve,
And sae did I o' mine.

V.

Wi' lightsome heart I pu'd a rose
Frae aff its thorny tree,
And my fause luver staw my rose,
But left the thorn wi' me.

M'PHERSON'S FAREWELL

Chorus

Sae rantingly, sae wantonly,
Sae dauntingly gaed he,
He play'd a spring, and danc'd it round
Below the gallows-tree.

I.

Farewell, ye dungeons dark and strong.
The wretch's destinie!
M'Pherson's time will not be long
On yonder gallows-tree.

II.

O, what is death but parting breath?
On many a bloody plain
I've dar'd his face, and in this place
I scorn him yet again!

III.

Untie these bands from off my hands,
And bring to me my sword,
And there's no a man in all Scotland
But I'll brave him at a word.

IV.

I've liv'd a life of sturt and strife;
I die by treacherie:
It burns my heart I must depart,
And not avengèd be.

V.

Now farewell light, thou sunshine bright,
And all beneath the sky!
May coward shame distain his name,
The wretch that dare not die!

A BARD'S EPITAPH

I.

Is there a whim-inspirèd fool,
Owre fast for thought, owre hot for rule,
Owre blate to seek, owre proud to snool?—
Let him draw near;
And owre this grassy heap sing dool,
And drap a tear.

II.

Is there a Bard of rustic song,
Who, noteless, steals the crowds among,
That weekly this arèa throng?—
O, pass not by!
But with a frater-feeling strong,
Here, heave a sigh.

III.

Is there a man, whose judgment clear
Can others teach the course to steer,
Yet runs, himself, life's mad career
Wild as the wave?—
Here pause—and, thro' the starting tear,
Survey this grave.

IV.

The poor inhabitant below
Was quick to learn and wise to know,
And keenly felt the friendly glow
And softer flame;
But thoughtless follies laid him low,
And stain'd his name.

V.

Reader, attend! whether thy soul
Soars Fancy's flights beyond the pole,

Or darkling grubs this earthly hole
In low pursuit;
Know, prudent, cautious, self-control
Is wisdom's root.

SCOTS, WHA HAE

I.

Scots, wha hae wi' Wallace bled,
Scots, wham Bruce has aften led,
Welcome to your gory bed
Or to victorie!

II.

Now's the day, and now's the hour:
See the front o' battle lour,
See approach proud Edward's power—
Chains and slaverie!

III.

Wha will be a traitor knave?
Wha can fill a coward's grave?
Wha sae base as be a slave?—
Let him turn, and flee!

IV.

Wha for Scotland's King and Law
Freedom's sword will strongly draw,
Freeman stand or freeman fa',
Let him follow me!

V.

By Oppression's woes and pains,
By your sons in servile chains,
We will drain our dearest veins
But they shall be free!

VI.

Lay the proud usurpers low!
Tyrants fall in every foe!
Liberty's in every blow!
Let us do, or die![1]

[1]Pronounce to rhyme with *free*.

MY WIFE'S A WINSOME WEE THING

Chorus

She is a winsome wee thing,
She is a handsome wee thing,
She is a lo'esome wee thing,
This sweet wee wife o' mine!

I.

I never saw a fairer,
I never lo'ed a dearer,
And neist my heart I'll wear her,
For fear my jewel tine.

II.

The warld's wrack, we share o't;
The warstle and the care o't,
Wi' her I'll blythely bear it,
And think my lot divine.

Chorus

She is a winsome wee thing,
She is a handsome wee thing,
She is a lo'esome wee thing,
This sweet wee wife o' mine.

OF A' THE AIRTS

I.

Of a' the airts the wind can blaw
I dearly like the west,
For there the bonie lassie lives,
  The lassie I lo'e best.
There wild woods grow, and rivers row,
  And monie a hill between,
But day and night my fancy's flight
  Is ever wi' my Jean.

II.

I see her in the dewy flowers—
  I see her sweet and fair.
I hear her in the tunefu' birds—
  I hear her charm the air.
There's not a bonie flower that springs
  By fountain, shaw, or green,
There's not a bonie bird that sings,
  But minds me o' my Jean.

JOHN ANDERSON MY JO

I.

John Anderson my Jo, John,
When we were first acquent,
Your locks were like the raven,
Your bonie brow was brent;
But now your brow is beld, John,
Your locks are like the snaw,
But blessings on your frosty pow,
John Anderson my jo!

II.

John Anderson my jo, John,
We clamb the hill thegither,
And monie a cantie day, John,
We've had wi' ane anither;
Now we maun totter down, John,
And hand in hand we'll go,
And sleep thegither at the foot,
John Anderson my jo!

I HAE A WIFE O' MY AIN

I.

I hae a wife o' my ain,
  I'll partake wi' naebody:
I'll take cuckold frae nane,
  I'll gie cuckold to naebody.

II.

I hae a penny to spend,
  There—thanks to naebody:
I hae naething to lend,
  I'll borrow frae naebody.

III.

I am naebody's lord,
  I'll be slave to naebody.
I hae a guid braid sword,
  I'll tak dunts frae naebody.

IV.

I'll be merry and free,
  I'll be sad for naebody.
Naebody cares for me,
  I care for naebody.

SWEET AFTON

I.

Flow gently, sweet Afton, among thy green braes!
Flow gently, I'll sing thee a song in thy praise!
My Mary's asleep by thy murmuring stream—
Flow gently, sweet Afton, disturb not her dream!

II.

Thou stock dove whose echo resounds thro' the glen,
Ye wild whistling blackbirds in yon thorny den,
Thou green-crested lapwing, thy screaming forbear—
I charge you, disturb not my slumbering fair!

III.

How lofty, sweet Afton, thy neighbouring hills,
Far mark'd with the courses of clear, winding rills!
There daily I wander, as noon rises high,
My flocks and my Mary's sweet cot in my eye.

IV.

How pleasant thy banks and green vallies below,
Where wild in the woodlands the primroses blow!
There oft, as mild Ev'ning weeps over the lea,
The sweet-scented birk shades my Mary and me.

V.

Thy crystal stream, Afton, how lovely it glides,
And winds by the cot where my Mary resides!
How wanton thy waters her snowy feet lave,
As, gathering sweet flowerets, she stems thy clear wave!

VI.

Flow gently, sweet Afton, among thy green braes!
Flow gently, sweet river, the theme of my lays!
My Mary's asleep by thy murmuring stream—
Flow gently, sweet Afton, disturb not her dream!

A RED, RED ROSE

I

O, my luve is like a red, red rose,
That's newly sprung in June.
O, my luve is like the melodie,
That's sweetly play'd in tune.

II.

As fair art thou, my bonie lass,
So deep in luve am I,
And I will luve thee still, my dear,
Till a' the seas gang dry.

III.

Till a' the seas gang dry, my dear,
And the rocks melt wi' the sun!
And I will luve thee still, my dear,
While the sands o' life shall run.

IV.

And fare thee weel, my only luve,
And fare thee weel a while!
And I will come again, my luve,
Tho' it were ten thousand mile!

HIGHLAND MARY[1]

I.

Ye banks and braes and streams around
  The castle o' Montgomery,
Green be your woods, and fair your flowers,
  Your waters never drumlie!
There Summer first unfald her robes,
  And there the langest tarry!
For there I took the last fareweel
  O' my sweet Highland Mary!

II.

How sweetly bloom'd the gay, green birk,
  How rich the hawthorn's blossom,
As underneath their fragrant shade
  I clasp'd her to my bosom!
The golden hours on angel wings
  Flew o'er me and my dearie:
For dear to me as light and life
  Was my sweet Highland Mary.

III.

Wi' monie a vow and lock'd embrace
  Our parting was fu' tender;

---

[1]In a note to another poem on the same girl, called "My Highland Lassie," Burns says that she was "a warm-hearted, charming young creature as ever blessed a man with generous love. After a pretty long tract of the most ardent reciprocal attachment, we met by appointment on the second Sunday of May, in a sequestered spot by the Banks of Ayr, where we spent the day in taking farewell, before she should embark for the West Highlands to arrange matters for our projected change of life. At the close of the Autumn following she crossed the sea to meet me at Greenock, where she had scarce landed when she was seized with a malignant fever, which hurried my dear girl to the grave in a few days, before I could even hear of her illness."

And, pledging aft to meet again,
We tore oursels asunder.
But O, fell Death's untimely frost,
That nipt my flower sae early!
Now green's the sod, and cauld's the clay,
That wraps my Highland Mary!

IV.

O, pale, pale now, those rosy lips
I aft hae kiss'd sae fondly;
And clos'd for ay, the sparkling glance
That dwalt on me sae kindly;
And mouldering now in silent dust
That heart that lo'ed me dearly!
But still within my bosom's core
Shall live my Highland Mary.

IS THERE FOR HONEST POVERTY

I.

Is there for honest poverty
  That hings his head, an' a' that?
The coward slave, we pass him by—
  We dare be poor for a' that!
For a' that, an' a' that,
  Our toils obscure, an' a' that,
The rank is but the guinea's stamp,
  The man's the gowd for a' that.

II.

What though on hamely fare we dine,
  Wear hoddin grey, an' a' that?
Gie fools their silks, and knaves their wine—
  A man's a man for a' that.
For a' that, an' a' that,
  Their tinsel show, an' a' that,
The honest man, tho' e'er sae poor,
  Is king o' men for a' that.

III.

Ye see yon birkie ca'd 'a lord,'
  Wha struts, an' stares, an' a' that?
Tho' hundreds worship at his word,
  He's but a cuif for a' that.
For a' that, an' a' that,
  His ribband, star, an' a' that,
The man o' independent mind,
  He looks an' laughs at a' that.

IV.

A prince can mak a belted knight,
  A marquis, duke, an' a' that!
But an honest man's aboon his might—
  Guid faith, he mauna fa' that!
For a' that, an' a that.

Their dignities, an' a' that,
The pith o' sense an' pride o' worth
Are higher rank than a' that.

V.

Then let us pray that come it may
(As come it will for a' that)
That Sense and Worth o'er a' the earth
Shall bear the gree an' a' that!
For a' that, an' a' that,
It's comin yet for a' that,
That man to man the world o'er
Shall brithers be for a' that.

CA' THE YOWES TO THE KNOWES

Chorus

Ca' the yowes to the knowes,
Ca' them where the heather grows,
Ca' them where the burnie rowes,
My bonie dearie.

I.

Hark, the mavis' e'ening sang
Sounding Clouden's woods amang:
Then a-faulding let us gang,
My bonie dearie.

II.

We'll gae down by Clouden side,
Thro' the hazels, spreading wide
O'er the waves that sweetly glide
To the moon sae clearly.

III.

Yonder Clouden's silent towers
Where at moonshine's midnight hours,
O'er the dewy bending flowers
Fairies dance sae cheery.

IV.

Ghaist nor bogle shalt thou fear—
Thou'rt to Love and Heav'n sae dear
Nocht of ill may come thee near,
My bonie dearie.

Chorus

Ca' the yowes to the knowes,
Ca' them where the heather grows,
Ca' them where the burnie rowes,
My bonie dearie.

GLOSSARY

Note: The Glossary omits all Scottish words that are like standard English except for having *a*, *ai*, *au*, or *i*, in place of *o*; for example, *hald* for *hold*, *aff* for *off*, *stane* for *stone*, *cauld* for *cold*, *snawie* for *snowy*, *lang* for *long*, *baith* for *both*, *mair* for *more*, *wha* for *who*, *brither* for *brother*, *ain* for *own*, *lades* for *loads*. It also omits all words which have an apostrophe in place of a final *d* or *l*; for example, *win'* for *wind*, *a'* for *all*, *faithfu'* for *faithful*.

A

aboon, above; *to get aboon*, to rejoice.
acquent, acquainted.
ae, one.
agley, askew, astray.
aiblins, perhaps.
airts, directions.
amaist, almost.
amuck. The word *amoq* is a Malay adjective applied to a man or an animal in a fighting frenzy, it is used in English only in combination with *run*. *To run amuck* means to behave in a wild, headstrong fashion.
ance, once.
ane, one.
Auld Nick, the devil.
ay, ever, always.

B

Bacon, Roger (1219-1294): an English Franciscan friar, one of the greatest of medieval scholars, who was imprisoned as a heretic and a sorcerer.
Barleycorn, John: a nickname for whiskey or ale.
Batteux (1709-1785): a French critic of no great importance
bear, barley.
beld. bald.
beldams, ugly old women.

belyve, by-and-by.
ben, inside.
bickering, hurrying.
bield, shelter.
big, build.
billies, fellows.
bing, heap.
Birbeck, Morris: the author of a book published in 1818, *Notes on a Journey in America*.
birkie, fellow.
birks, birches.
bizz, buzz.
blate, shy, modest.
bleeze, blaze; *bleezing*, blazing.
blellum, babbler.
blethering, chattering.
blink, glimpse.
bluid, blood.
bocked, gushed.
boddle, farthing. "Fair play, he car'd na deils a boddle," =With fair play, he cared not a farthing for devils.
bogles, bogies, specters or evil spirits.
Boileau (1636-1711): a French poet and critic; very influential in spreading the so-called classical theories of literary criticism.
bonie, bonier: Burns's spelling and common in Scotland for *bonnie, bonnier*, beautiful, more beautiful.
bonnet, a Scotch cap worn by men, shaped like what is now known as a tam-o'-shanter, the name being derived from the poem.
bore, chink, hole.
Boreas: Greek god of the north wind; hence, the wind itself.
bousing, drinking.
braes, slopes.
brattle, scamper.
braw, brave, but means handsome.
brawlie, very well, excellently.
breeks, breeches.

brent, straight. "Your bonie brow was brent"=not sloping back from baldness.
brent new, brand new.
burdies, maidens.
burin, engraver's tool.
burns, little rivers.
but, without.
Butler, Samuel (1612-1680): author of the satiric poem, *Hudibras.* He is said to have died in extreme poverty, though his poem was much admired by Charles II and his court.
byke, hive.

C

ca', call, but may mean drive or follow a plough or tend cattle.
cairn, a pile of stones.
callets, women (disrespectful).
Camoens (1524-1580): the greatest of Portugese poets.
cannie, pleasant, quiet, cheerful.
cantie, jolly.
cantraip sleight, magic device.
carlin, a disrespectful term for an old woman.
chanters, bagpipes.
chapman, merchant, especially traveling merchant or pedler.
chows, chews.
claes, clothes.
clamb, climbed.
claught, seized.
cleekit, took hold.
coft, bought.
Coil, Lugar, Greenock, Garpal: rivers of Ayrshire.
Constable's Miscellany: Archibald Constable, publisher of the *Edinburgh Review* and of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, died the year before this Essay was published in the *Review.* His *Miscellany* was a series of standard works in small volumes.
coost, cast off.
core, corps, company.
cour, stoop.

cracks, chats.
cranreuch, hoar-frost.
creeshie, greasy.
Crockford's: a fashionable club in London.
crummock, cudgel.
cuckold, a nickname given to a man whose wife is unfaithful to him. *To take or give cuckold* is to take or give this nickname.
cuif, dolt, fool.
cutty, short.

D

daimen icker, odd ear.
Defoe, Daniel (1661-1731): author of *Robinson Crusoe*, etc.
deil, devil.
Delphi: the principal seat of the worship of Apollo, the ancient Greek god of the sun and of poetry.
dinna, do not.
dirl, ring (verb).
distain, stain.
dithyrambic, originally a passionate hymn sung in honor of the Greek god Dionysos; Carlyle uses it of a song presenting exalted and intense emotion.
dool, grief.
douce gudeman, sober and respectable man of the house.
doure, hard and stubborn.
dowie, drooping, sad.
dribble, drizzle.
drouthy, thirsty.
Druids: priests belonging to the ancient inhabitants of the British Isles and of Western Europe.
drumlie, turbid, muddy.
dub, puddle.
duddies, rags.
dunts, blows.

E

e'e, eye; *een*, eyes.
eldritch, unearthly.
ettle, aim.
eydent, diligent.

F

fa', fall, but "he mauna fa' that"=he must not claim that.
fand, found.
fause, false.
fient, fiend, but "the fient a tail"=no tail at all.
fell, biting, pungent.
fidged, fidgeted.
flang, flung.
flannen, fannel.
fleesh, fleece.
flichterin', fluttering.
foggage, coarse grass.
fou, full, drunk.
frae, from.
frater-feeling, brotherly feeling.
fyke, fret, disturbance.

G

gab, mouth.
gaed, went.
Galileo (1564-1642): an Italian astronomer, who insisted that the world revolves around the sun and was put in prison until he denied the truth of this alleged heresy.
Galloway: district in Southwestern Scotland.
gang, go.
gar, make, cause; past tense, *gart*.
gate, road, way. (Compare *gait*).
gibbet-airns, gibbet-irons: iron chains in which the dead bodies of criminals used to be hung up for a warning.
gie, give.
girn, grin.
Glenbuck: the source of the river Ayr.
glowr, stare (noun or verb).
gowd, gold.
gree, degree, prize, first place.
guid, good.
guidwife, goodwife, "lady of the house."
gumlie, muddy.

H

hae, have.

haffets, side-locks of hair.
hafflins, half.
hained, saved.
hale, whole.
hallan, wall.
harn, coarse cloth.
hawkie, cow.
hawking, crying articles for sale.
healsome, wholesome.
hersel, herself.
hing, hang.
histie, bare.
hoddin grey, coarse grey woollen.
hotched, jerked.
houlets, owls.
howe, glen.
Hume, David (1711-1776); one of the greatest philsophers of the 18th century.
hurdies, buttocks.

I

ilk, ilka, each, every.
ingle, fireplace.
in malam partem, a Latin phrase meaning "in bad part," that is, with any unfavorable criticism.
Isle of Dogs: in the Thames a few miles below London Bridge.

J

jad, jade, a humorous or contemptuous term for a young woman.
jauk, trifle (verb).
jaups, splashes.
Jean Paul: Jean (or Johann) Paul Richter (1763-1825), a German poet and philosopher, whose influence on Carlyle was great.

K

Kames, Lord (1696-1782): a Scottish judge, who wrote *Elements of Criticism*, 1762.
kebbuck, cheese.
ken, know; *kend*, knew or known.

ket, fleece.
kiaugh, anxiety.
knowe, knoll.
kye, cattle.

L

La Flèche: a French town, where Hume lived for some years.
laithfu', loathful, backward, diffident.
lane, lone; "no thy lane"=not alone.
lap, leaped.
lave, the rest, what is left.
lea, meadow.
lea'e, leave.
lift, sky: "far south the lift"=far south in the sky.
linket, tripped.
linking, tripping.
loadstar, a star used as a guide by mariners; usually the polar star.
lo'ed, loved.
louping, leaping.
Lowe, Sir Hudson: the governor of St. Helena during Napoleon's captivity on that island.
lyart, grey.

M

Mably (1709-1785): a French diplomat and statesman.
maun, must; *mauna*, must not.
meikle, large, much.
melder, meal-grinding.
mense, tact, good manners.
Minerva Press: a London establishment, where cheap novels were printed in large numbers.
mining, undermining.
mirk, dark.
modica, small quantities.
monie or *mony*, many.
Montesquieu (1689-1755): a French jurist; his book, *The Spirit of the Laws*, influenced political thinking all over Europe.
mosses, bogs.

N

na, nae, not.
naig, nag, horse.
nappy, ale.
neebor, neighbor.
neist, next.
Nickie-ben, nickname for the devil.
no, not.

O

ony, any.
ourie, shivering.
ower, owre, over.

P

parritch, porridge.
pattle, plough-staff.
Phoebus: Greek god of the sun; another name for Apollo; used by Burns to mean the sun itself.
pleugh, plough.
Poussin, Nicolas (1594-1665): a French painter of landscapes and historical scenes. His painting, "The Deluge," hangs in the Lonvre Museum at Paris.
pow, pate.
Propaganda Missionaries: Roman Catholic missionary priests sent out under what is called the Congregation of the Propaganda or *Congregatio de Propaganda Fide* at Rome.
pund, pound; a "pund Scots" is worth less than one-tenth of an English pound.

Q

queans, girls.
Quesnay (1694-1774) a French economist of great ability.

R

Rabelais, Francois (1495-1553): a great French humorist and satirist.
Racine (1639-1699): the greatest writer of French classical tragedies.
Ramsgate: a seaside resort near London.

rantingly, rollickingly.
raucle, rough.
ream, foam.
reaming, foaming.
red-wat-shod, wearing shoes wet and red with blood. The word occurs in Burns's "Epistle to William Simpson of Ochiltree."
reekit, steamed.
remead, remedy.
Retzsch (1759-1857): a German painter and engraver, who had illustrated the works of Carlyle's favorite German authors, Goethe and Schiller.
ribband, ribbon.
Richardson, Samuel (1689-1761): author of *Clarissa Harlowe* and other novels; sometimes called the Father of the English Novel.
rigwoodie, ancient and lean.
rin, run.
Robertson, William (1721-1793): author of a well-known history of Chares V.
Rottonkey or Ratton-key: a small landing-place at the mouth of the Ayr.
row, rowe, roll.

S

sae, so.
sair, sore, hard, hardly, very, very much.
sark, a chemise or long shirt.
saut, salt.
shaw, wood, grove.
siller, silver, money.
sic, such.
sin', since.
skellum, a good-for-nothing person.
skelpit, ran noisily, slapped along.
skirl, squeal (verb).
skriech, screech.
slaps, openings, breaks in fences or walls.
sleekit, sleek.

Smith, Adam (1723-1790) : a professor at Glasgow University, author of The *Wealth of Nations* and one of the founders of the science of political economy.
smoored, smothered.
snaw-broo, snow-brew, slushy water.
snell, biting, bitter.
snool, cringe.
sonnet, song.
soupe, milk.
souple, supple.
souter, cobbler.
span-lang, as long as a span, that is, the distance over which the hand can be expanded.
speat, spate, torrent, flood.
spean a foal, disgust a colt so that it cannot eat.
spence, parlor.
spiers, asks.
spring, a quick, lively tune.
stacher, stagger, totter.
stack, stuck.
stake, chance.
staw, stole.
Sterne, Laurence (1713-1768) : an English humorist and sentimentalist, author of *Tristram Shandy*.
Stewart, Dugald (1753-1828) : a Scotch philosopher, professor at Edinburgh University.
stibble, stubble.
stoure, dust.
strathspey, a Scottish dance.
sturt, trouble.
sud, should.
sugh, wail.
swat, sweated.
swats, new ale.
syne, afterwards, since, then.

T

taen, taken.
Tasso (1544-1595) : an Italian poet, imprisoned in a madhouse by the Duke of Ferrara, probably for daring to make love to the Duke's daughter.

tatterdemalions, ragged fellows.
tawted, matted.
Teniers: the name of two Flemish painters of the 17th century, both of whom painted tavern scenes and pictures of low life.
tentie, heedful, attentive.
thae, these.
Theocritus: a Greek poet of the third century B. C.; his poems deal for the most part with idealized shepherds of Sicily; they are called "idyls," that is, little pictures of country life.
thir, these.
thole, endure.
thowes, thaws.
thrave, twenty-four sheaves.
Tieck and Musäus: two German authors who used folk-lore and superstitions in their writings.
till, to.
tine, be lost.
tint, lost.
tippenny, ale costing twopence.
tips, rams.
Titan: one of a race of giants in Greek mythology, who were said to have piled Mount Ossa upon Mount Pelion in an attempt to scale Olympus and overthrow Zeus.
Tophet: a valley near Jersualem, where the refuse of the city was thrown out and burnt; the name came to be a synonym for Hell.
toun, farm.
tousie, shaggy.
towmound, twelvemonth, year.
Tuileries: a palace in Paris, at that time the residence of of the French king; most of the palace was burned down in 1871, and the name is now used of the public gardens on its site.
tyke, a dog.

U

unco, wondrous, unusually.
uncos, wonders or strange things.
unfald, unfold.

upo', upon.
usquabae, whiskey (the original form of the word, which is of Celtic origin).

V

vauntie, proud.
Voltaire (1694-1778): a French critic, poet, and damatist; his influence on European thought was very great.

W

wad, would, would have.
wae, woe or woeful; *wae worth*, woe befall.
wales, selects.
wanchancie, dangerous.
wanton, playful, playfully.
warl', world.
warlocks, wizards.
warstle, wrestle.
wassail, carousal, occasion for festivity. The word is from an Old English salutation used in drinking healths: "Wes hal" or "waes hael," "be whole or well."
wat, know.
wawlie, choice (adj.).
wear, be worn.
weel, well.
weet, wet.
whins, furze or gorse, spiny shrubs common in Scotland.
whyles, sometimes.
wi', with.
winnock-bunker, window-seat.
wist, knew.

Y

'yont, beyond.
yowe, ewe.

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